

Cultural Arrogance and Blind Faith: The Strategic Origins of the Dardanelles Campaign

A Monograph

by

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14. ABSTRACT

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This Monograph also considers where the responsibility lies. The burden of blame and responsibility has too often been aimed at individuals. The standard historiography of the campaign tends to portray it as the brainchild of Winston Churchill, then the First Lord of the Admiralty, foisted upon a supine British War Council and resulting, through poor operational execution by the theatre commander, General Sir Ian Hamilton, in an unalloyed disaster. Whilst both these individuals bear their share of responsibility for the failure it is the opinion of this author that this is too narrow and simplistic an explanation. Instead, the root causes of failure are to be found in the personalities and actions of the key players in and around the War Council and in the structures and methods employed by the government in the higher direction of the war. All of these factors were symptomatic of a collective, psychological failure on the part of the government to come to terms with the scope, scale, and requirements of a war unparalleled in extent, nature, and complexity.

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Abstract

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The British Government under Prime Minister H. H. Asquith failed to seek, and its military leaders failed to offer, substantive professional military advice on the practicalities of conducting a large scale, multi-national, joint campaign in the Dardanelles in 1915. This led to the prosecution of a military campaign founded on wishful thinking and questionable assumptions and unguided by a thorough military appreciation of the situation. This paper explores whether such advice, when set against the strategic objectives of the campaign, would ultimately have led to the cancellation of the campaign. It concludes that the Asquith government drifted into a campaign, propelled by fear of lost prestige but buoyed by an overriding sense of cultural superiority and a deep-rooted belief in the historical infallibility of the Royal Navy, which ultimately contributed greatly to its own political demise.

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Acronyms

ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
BEF	British Expeditionary Force (in France/Belgium)
CID	Committee for Imperial Defence
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CinC	Commander in Chief
DMO	Director of Military Operations
First Lord	First Lord of the Admiralty, the civilian political head of the service and government department
First Sea Lord	First Sea Lord of the Admiralty, the senior serving naval officer and professional head of the service
HMS	His Majesty's Ship (title of Royal Naval vessels)
MEF	Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (originally the Constantinople Expeditionary Force)
PM	Prime Minister
RM	Royal Marines
RMLI	Royal Marine Light Infantry
RN	Royal Navy
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland

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Structure and Introduction

Introduction

In 1904, the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir John ('Jacky') Fisher, came to the conclusion that the forcing of the Dardanelles would be a "mightily hazardous" operation.¹ In 1906, the British General Staff summed up the results of a lengthy joint War Office and Admiralty study into the feasibility of attacking the Dardanelles with the pleasingly understated comment that such an attempt was "much to be deprecated."² In 1911, the First Lord of the Admiralty, one Winston Churchill, informed his cabinet colleagues that "it is no longer possible to force the Dardanelles."³ Yet in early 1915 the British tried just that and were roundly defeated by the Turks. How had this transformation in strategic outlook come about and why? What can the answer to this first question tell the reader about the nature of civil military interaction at the point at which national policy meets military strategy?

There is an enduring romance to be found in the Dardanelles Campaign of 1915. Fought against the backdrop of Homer's 'wine dark sea' featuring, *inter alia*, the slouch hatted ANZAC 'Diggers' and pantalooned French colonial poilus facing up to the doughty 'Mehmets' of the Turkish army with the poems of Rupert Brooke softly recited in the background. Few campaigns, and none since the development of mass, industrialized warfare, stir the imagination as much. The eventual failure of the campaign left the reputation of Britain in the Middle East and Asia much weakened and that of the Central Powers strengthened. The failure ensured that the

¹ United Kingdom, *Dardanelles Commission of Inquiry Papers* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), 1917 (1st Report and Supplement) and 1919 (Final Report and Appendices)), 6.

² United Kingdom, *The Possibility of a Joint Naval and Military Attack upon the Dardanelles, Memorandum by the General Staff, CAB 4/2/92B* (London: Public Records Office, HMSO, December 19, 1906), 1.

³ Quoted in: Robert Rhodes-James, *Gallipoli* (London: Batsford, 1965), 4.

Western Front became the Allied main effort for the remainder of the war and almost buried Winston Churchill as a political force. It opened the door to mounting criticism of the Liberal government of Prime Minister H.H. Asquith's handling of the war and contributed significantly to its downfall in 1916. The campaign also entered the national mythology of Australia through the ANZAC legend, and that of modern, secular, Turkey through the part played by Mustafa Kemal (Kemal Ataturk).⁴ The campaign has resonance today with its themes of; the competence of career politicians to construct grand strategy based on national policy and the extent to which the military should expect their political masters to become involved in the detailed direction of military campaigns. In addition the campaign highlights the utility of an indirect approach in warfare, the complexities of multinational alliances and the practicalities of military leadership at the strategic/operational divide.⁵ The impending centenary of the Allied landings on April 25, 1915 adds poignancy and contemporary relevance to the study of the campaign.

Thesis

The purpose of this monograph is not to rehash the course of the tactical battle on and around the Gallipoli Peninsula.⁶ Rather it is interested in the debate, discussion, and decisions that led to the campaign being fought in the first place. The paper examines what today might be called the civil/military interface, the domain where national policy is translated into military strategy. The thesis is this; that the British Government under Asquith failed to seek, and its military leaders failed to offer, substantive professional military advice on the practicalities of

⁴ Appendix A contains brief details on the dramatis personae of the campaign, including photographs where available.

⁵ The word 'military' will be used to describe both maritime and land (RN and British Army) activity, planning, and concepts unless annotated otherwise.

⁶ For the purposes of this monograph the term Dardanelles Campaign will refer to the entire military operation both afloat and ashore while reference to the Gallipoli Campaign will refer to the land campaign specifically.

conducting a large scale, multi-national, joint campaign, in complex terrain, against a significant opponent, several thousands of miles from the home base. This led to the prosecution of a military campaign founded on wishful thinking and questionable assumptions and unguided by a thorough military appreciation of the situation. The paper explores whether such advice, when set against the strategic objectives of the campaign, would ultimately have led to the cancellation of the campaign. It concludes that the Asquith government drifted into a campaign, propelled by fear of lost prestige but buoyed by an overriding sense of cultural superiority and a deep rooted belief in the historical infallibility of the Royal Navy (RN). This ultimately contributed greatly to its own political demise and cost the lives of almost fifty thousand Allied servicemen and perhaps up to ninety thousand Turks.

The monograph also considers where the responsibility lies. Analysis starts from the perspective that the burden of blame and responsibility has too often been aimed at individuals. The standard historiography of the campaign tends to portray it as the “cigar-butt strategy” brainchild of Winston Churchill, then the First Lord of the Admiralty (First Lord),⁷ foisted upon a supine British War Council and resulting, through poor operational execution by the Allied Commander-in-Chief, (CinC) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (MEF), General Sir Ian Hamilton, in an unalloyed disaster.⁸ Whilst both these individuals do bear their share of responsibility for the failure it is the opinion of this author that this is too narrow and simplistic an explanation. Instead, the root causes of failure reside in the personalities and actions of the key

⁷ The civilian political head of the RN, not to be confused with the various Sea Lords who were serving RN officers.

⁸ The War Council was a subcommittee of the full British Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister, staffed by members of the Committee for Imperial Defence (CID) secretariat, and charged with the strategic direction of the war. During the course of the Dardanelles Campaign this committee changed its name on three occasions. It was the War Council until July 15, the Dardanelles Committee between July and October 15 and the War Committee thereafter. Quotation by AJP Taylor quoted in: Rhodes-James, *Gallipoli*, 353.

players in and around the War Council and in the structures and methods employed by the government in the higher direction of the war. All of these factors, it is suggested, were symptomatic of a collective, psychological, failure on the part of the government to come to terms with the scope, scale, and requirements of a war unparalleled in extent, nature and complexity.

Monograph Structure

This monograph takes the following five stages. The introductory section contains the thesis, this structural section and concludes by defining its terms. Specifically it highlights the contemporary understanding of policy and strategy. It notes that the former was acknowledged to be the domain of statesmen and politicians and the latter of generals and admirals – but only by the admirals and generals, not their civilian masters. The second section describes the key events of the decision-making process leading up to the campaign. This element is unapologetically narrative in construct. It gives the reader an understanding of the key events in the sequence in which they occurred and an understanding of what the governments Grand Strategic design was intended to achieve. Interpretation, argument, and inference based on those events follows later in the monograph. The third section begins by examining the validity of the grand strategic design and its underlying assumptions. It moves on to consideration of whether a full military appreciation would have made a difference to government decision making and concludes that it would not.

The thesis is further developed by next considering, in section four, whether, and to what extent, the Admiralty and War Office gave adequate consideration to the practicalities of the proposed operations. The central element of this section examines the roles played in British war

decision making in four key areas of defence⁹ management. It starts with the Admiralty and focus on its leading figures, First Lord Churchill and First Sea Lord Admiral Jacky Fisher. Due consideration is also be given to the role of the Admiralty War Group and the part played by Admiral Sir Henry Jackson, Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson and Vice-Admiral Henry Oliver, three of its senior planners.¹⁰ It demonstrates that, despite grave misgivings about the part of the RN in the campaign and widely differing military strategic views, the professional seamen, and Fisher in particular, failed to voice their objections adequately. The role of the War Office is considered next. Here the focus includes the Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, but also dissects the roles of the General Staff including the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) Lieutenant General Sir James Wolfe Murray and his Director of Military Operations (DMO) Major General CE Callwell. The conclusion is that, like the Admiralty, the military professionals of the Army utterly failed to discharge their duty in appraising their political masters of their doubts over the viability of the campaign. Third, the organizational factors at play are explored. Specifically the supersession of the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) by a series of ad hoc and ill-understood sub cabinet bodies and in particular, the destabilizing and neutering effect this had on the military professionals is lamented. The final strand of section four is the politicians themselves. The parts played by Churchill and Kitchener is again considered, this time as members of the War Council rather than as the political heads of their respective services. The conclusion reached is that Churchill's eloquence and drive and Kitchener's unchallenged authority and inability to articulate his own strategic vision played leading, but not

⁹ The British spelling will be used throughout this paper, largely due to the Committee of Imperial Defence receiving significant attention.

¹⁰ Jackson was without formal portfolio but was generally employed as an advisor on overseas naval operations (i.e. not those of the Grand Fleet in the North Sea). Wilson, a former First Sea Lord, had retired but was brought into the Admiralty as an informal consultant; Oliver was the Chief of the Naval Staff.

solitary, roles in the failure of the campaign. The net broadens, however, and also consider the often overlooked or underplayed parts played by Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George, ex-officio War Council member (and later First Lord after Churchill) Sir Arthur Balfour and particularly the Prime Minister (PM), Asquith. Asquith's style of leadership and management is uncovered as unsuited for wartime conditions and the roles of Lloyd George and Balfour are highlighted as enthusiastic supporters of an indirect Grand Strategy that sought to find alternatives to the bloody attrition of the Western Front. The monograph concludes with a brief fifth section summarizing its findings and drawing conclusions.

Strategy in Context

Prior to embarking upon a description of the events of the campaign, it is useful to pause and to consider what, in early 1915, was meant by the word 'Strategy'. Space precludes a comprehensive exploration of the lengthy etymology of the word, and Lawrence Freedman has rather cornered the market in that respect.¹¹ It is sufficient to say that by the early 20th century the common understanding had moved beyond the Napoleonic Era definition of Von Clausewitz that "strategy is the use of the engagement for the purpose of the war" which nowadays would be referred to as operational art.¹² The utility of the word had not yet entered the business world or public argot to the extent that it has today and its use remained largely focused on political and military matters. Strategy, to the Edwardian military mind, remained primarily the domain of senior soldiers and sailors, and was a different entity from 'Policy', 'Grand Strategy' or 'National Strategy' (all of which expressions seem to have been used interchangeably).¹³ The latter was the

¹¹As exemplified in: Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹² Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 177.

¹³ Strictly speaking the Edwardian era of British history closed in 1910 with the death of

business of governments and politicians/statesmen and involved the direction and co-ordination of national resources to attain a politically directed objective. The former, on the other hand, was the domain of uniformed professionals and involved, as a contemporary soldier put it, “the naval and military plans for defeating the enemy,” so it was definably broader than operations but bearing upon the planning and command of campaigns.¹⁴ Hew Strachan confirms this point when he points out that “by 1900 military men were...agreed that strategy described the conduct of operations in a particular theatre of war...it was something done by generals”.¹⁵ He goes on to make a further point important to the thesis when he reminds his reader that “strategy was only one of three components which made up war – the central element sandwiched between national policy...and tactics. Each was separate, but the three had to be kept in harmony.”¹⁶ This contemporary distinction between the domains of the politician/statesman and those of the general/admiral are particularly important to an understanding of the origins of the Dardanelles Campaign. It would appear that such a distinction was not immediately apparent to the civilians and it was blurred if not eradicated in the machinations of the War Council in early 1915. Although anachronistic having been penned half a century later, the words of the American political scientist Samuel Huntington are apposite here for they would have struck a chord even in 1915. When he states that “[t]he statesman furnishes the dynamic, purposive element to state policy. The military man represents the passive, instrumental means” one can almost see Kitchener, Fisher and their ilk nodding in agreement even if somewhat irked by the passive

King Edward VIII, however in common usage the term Edwardian is used to describe Britain throughout the first two decades of the 20th century, it will be used in that sense in this paper.

¹⁴ Lt. Gen. Sir Gerald Ellison, *The Perils of Amateur Strategy: as Exemplified by the Attack on the Dardanelles Fortress in 1915* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1926), 100.

¹⁵ Hew Strachan, “The Lost Meaning of Strategy,” *Survival*, vol. 47, number 3 (Autumn 2005): 36.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

comment.¹⁷ The final military view is left to General Gerald Ellison who stated that “politics and strategy are radically and fundamentally things apart from one another. Strategy begins where politics end.”¹⁸ Whether this view of the boundaries would have struck a chord with Lloyd George, Churchill, or Asquith is somewhat more problematic. As this monograph will illustrate it seems that Asquith and his civilian colleagues would have had more truck with Clausewitz when he pointed out that “war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument.” They would also have agreed with Clausewitz’s interpreter Eliot Cohen that this meant, “there is no field of military action that might not be touched by politics.”¹⁹ In short, while the Edwardian military may have hoped for some freedom of action in the Military Strategy sphere once the civilians had defined Grand Strategy, the civilians accepted no such division of labor.

Context and Narrative, The Events of 1914/1915²⁰

The Dardanelles

The Dardanelles Straits had long been of strategic interest to Britain and became significantly more important with the outbreak of the war and Britain’s alliance with Russia. The Straits provided Russia with her only year round ‘warm water’ maritime access and were thus critical to her trade and to her lines of communication to her wartime allies, Britain and France. They were, however, in the possession of Turkey, which, since the advent of the Young Turks in

¹⁷ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959), 68-9.

¹⁸ Ellison, *Amateur Strategy*, 100. Lt Gen Sir Gerald Ellison served at Gallipoli as Deputy Inspector-General of Communications, was a close friend of Gen Hamilton, and was touted as a possible COS for Hamilton at the outset of the campaign. He also wrote a stinging critique of the role of civilian politicians in the decision to mount the campaign in his book cited above. He can hardly, therefore, be considered an impartial observer.

¹⁹ Clausewitz, *On War*, 87. Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: The Free Press, 2002), 8

²⁰ Appendix B contains a detailed chronology of the campaign which supplements this section.

1909, had increasingly looked to Germany for financial and military support. Initially neutral, Turkey eventually entered the war on the side of the Central Powers when, in early November 1914, the Entente Powers declared war on her.²¹ The immediate motivation for this declaration was the bombardment of Russian Black Sea ports by elements of the Turkish Black Sea fleet reinforced by the German warships *Goeben* and *Breslau*.²² On November 3rd, partly in response, the British Mediterranean fleet's Aegean squadron bombarded Sedd-el-Bahr and Kum Kale, the outermost Turkish forts at the entrance to the Straits, causing significant damage. One other noteworthy chapter from these early days of the war was the offer of the Greek Government, then neutral, to place its fleet and army at the disposal of the allies. This led to Churchill and Kitchener commissioning the General Staff to consider options for a Greek invasion of the Gallipoli Peninsula leading to an incursion into the Sea of Marmara by the RN. However, in the interim, the Greeks withdrew their offer and Gallipoli, as Robert Rhodes-James notes, "receded into the background."²³

²¹ Britain did not assist Turkey in remaining neutral as, in early August 1914, the Admiralty requisitioned two battleships being built in Britain for the Turkish Navy. That the *Sultan Osman I* and *Reshadieh* had been paid for by funds raised by public subscription in Turkey only heightened the sense of injustice.

²² Both vessels had been pursued to the Dardanelles by the RN in August 14 and had, in name at least, transferred to the Turkish Navy. However, they remained commanded and partially crewed by German Kaiserliche (Imperial Navy) personnel.

²³ Rhodes-James, *Gallipoli*, 11.



Figure 1. The Dardanelles Straits and surrounding area. Mapping accessed January 6, 2015 from <http://www.anzacsite.gov.au>.

It was not to stay in the background for long. When the War Council met on November 25, 1914, discussions turned to the defence of Egypt, then perceived to be under threat from the Turks in the Sinai. Churchill stated his view that “the ideal method of defending Egypt was by an attack on the Gallipoli Peninsula. This, if successful, would give us control of the Dardanelles, and we could dictate terms at Constantinople.”²⁴ He went on to acknowledge that such a course of action “was a very difficult operation requiring a large force”. Moreover, lest the reader conclude at this point that Churchill had a grand design in mind already he further mused that perhaps, on reflection, a feint could be made at Gallipoli disguising a possible attack elsewhere in the Mediterranean at “Haifa, or some point on the Syrian coast”.²⁵ Interestingly, Fisher involved

²⁴ United Kingdom, *Papers of the War Council, Dardanelles Committee and War Committee 1914-15*, CAB 42 (London: Public Records Office, HMSO, 1916, CAB 42/1/4 (hereafter abbreviated to CAB 42)), 3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

himself in the ensuing discussion wondering, once again, whether the Greeks could be coaxed into playing a role at Gallipoli if needs be before Kitchener, in a manner which brooked no argument, flatly stated that “he felt no anxiety about Egypt and the Suez Canal”.²⁶ With this authoritative statement from Britain’s leading soldier and expert on Egyptian strategic affairs,²⁷ the War Council adjourned with the Dardanelles, if not at the forefront of the minds of its members, certainly noted as an area of significance and potential.

The Search for Strategic Options

The last days of 1914 and the first of the New Year saw something of a Grand Strategic outpouring from the members and staff of the War Council together with an appeal from its Russian allies. It is in these events that the true genesis of the Dardanelles Campaign is found although historians remain divided over its exact causality. Three papers were prepared, circulated, and discussed concerning the future course of the war. Each was rooted in the unforeseen development of siege warfare in the west, a fear of destroying the cream of England’s manhood²⁸ in futile attacks on prepared positions and a desire to seek other ways of defeating the Central Powers. The experienced and influential Secretary of the War Council, Lieutenant Colonel Maurice Hankey, was first off the mark with a paper, dated December 28, 1914,²⁹ which commenced:

²⁶ Ibid., 6.

²⁷ Kitchener had been Britain’s ‘Agent’ in Egypt – in effect its Vice Regent – up to the outbreak of the war. He had also been ‘Sirdar’ (CinC) of the Egyptian Army during his long and illustrious career.

²⁸ Kitchener’s ‘New Armies’. The result of the great patriotic rush to voluntarily enlist in the autumn of 1914 was the formation of thirty-six new army divisions from the 2.5million (by 1916) volunteers. The fear was that, as the most willing and earliest volunteers were often the best-educated men from relatively high social backgrounds, they formed an elite group that Britain could ill afford to lose.

²⁹ But known to historians as The Boxing Day memo.

“The remarkable deadlock which has occurred in the western theatre of war invites consideration of the question whether some other outlet can be found for the effective employment of the great forces we shall be able to dispose in a few months’ time.”³⁰

Hankey went on to suggest a number of technological means that might help to break the deadlock³¹ before warming to his central thesis; that Britain should be “using our sea power and our growing military strength to attack Germany and her allies in other quarters...particularly through Turkey.”³² His preference would be to harness the Balkan States, particularly Greece, Bulgaria and Rumania, and occupy Constantinople and the Dardanelles and Bosphorus Straits in conjunction with British and French forces or failing that, to attack the Ottomans in Syria or from Basra.

Almost concurrently, Churchill was penning his thoughts to Asquith on December 29th.³³ Churchill reached the same conclusions as Hankey regarding the western front and asked the PM whether there were “other alternatives than sending our armies to chew barbed wire in Flanders?”³⁴ Churchill’s alternatives stayed closer to home than Hankey’s and reflected the long held Admiralty view that the best use of Britain’s sea power was to use it in the North Sea and Baltic Sea to outflank the Germans. As a preliminary he suggested the seizure of the island of Borkum which would act both as a forward operating base and as a lure to draw out the German

³⁰ Lieutenant Colonel Hankey, Memorandum, December 28, 1914, quoted in Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: Vol. 3 and companion to vol. 3, parts 1 and 2* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971), 337.

³¹ Including, presciently, armored, motorized vehicles equipped with “‘caterpillar’ driving gear to grip the ground,” *Ibid.*, 338.

³² *Ibid.*, 341.

³³ His basic lines of argument were to be rehashed and amplified in a memorandum to the War Council on December 31st.

³⁴ Winston S. Churchill to H. H. Asquith, December 29, 1914 quoted in Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 344.

High Seas Fleet to meet its inevitable (in the eyes of the Admiralty) Gotterdammerung with the superior British Grand Fleet. Asquith was much taken with Hankey's memo and Churchill's letter and his thoughts, revealed in a letter to his mistress Venetia Stanley on New Year's Eve, are instructive. He too regarded the prospects in the west as "an enormous waste of life & [sic] money day after day with no appreciable progress" and expressed his desire to create "a diversion on a great & [sic] effective scale."³⁵

The final domestic cry for change came from Lloyd George, who wrote an extensive memo for the War Council on December 31, 1914. In many ways, Lloyd George's offering was the most radical of the three papers. While echoing the basic strategic impulse of both Hankey and Churchill that the New Armies must not be "thrown away upon futile enterprises such as those...of the last few weeks,"³⁶ he argued strongly for "the necessity of winning a definite victory somewhere" both for domestic morale purposes and to influence "hesitating neutrals."³⁷ As alternatives to the Western Front Lloyd George suggested two courses of action designed to act against Germany's allies and thus to have the effect of "knocking the props [from] under her."³⁸ The first was an attack on Austria, in conjunction with a grand alliance of (as yet neutral) Balkan states either from Salonica in Greece or via the Dalmatian Coast in the Adriatic. The second was an attack on Turkey by means of an amphibious descent on Syria by one hundred thousand allied troops. Such a move would cut off Turkish forces threatening Egypt, give Britain

³⁵ Asquith to Venetia Stanley, December 31, 1914 quoted in Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 346.

³⁶ A reference to the First Battle of Ypres, October 19th to November 22, 1914 that had resulted in around fifty-four thousand British casualties and which marked, effectively, the exsanguination of the BEF.

³⁷ CAB 42, 42/1/8, 2 and 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

some freedom of action in the Levant and Middle East, and relieve pressure on the Russians in the Caucasus.



Figure 2. Allied Strategic Options early 1915. Base map from <http://wikieducator.org> accessed January 9, 2015. Overlay information, author.

Thus, by the close of 1914 it was possible to detect a growing consensus within the highest echelons of British decision-making that a grand strategic change of course was required. Whilst there remained unanimity that the defeat of Germany was the main effort, and arguably even that the Western Front was the only theatre where such a defeat could be played out in the long run, there was growing agitation for more imaginative use of British forces and the New Armies in particular. At this stage a range of options were on the table but it is important to highlight that the notion of an operation, perhaps in the Mediterranean,³⁹ preferably exploiting

³⁹ Lloyd George used the phrase that such an operation should be “in territory which appeals to the imagination of the people,” CAB 42, 42/1/8, 5.

Britain's naval dominance and seeking to bring in new allies, to succor Russia and to undermine Germany's supposedly weaker allies was taking shape.

The Admiralty Plan

At this point, on January 1, 1915, the Foreign Secretary, Grey received notification from his man in St Petersburg that the "position of [the] Russians in the Caucasus gave cause for great anxiety" and that the Russian CinC (Grand Duke Nicholas) had "asked Lord Kitchener to arrange for a demonstration of some kind against the Turks elsewhere."⁴⁰ Kitchener, with "no troops to land anywhere" at present and with the New Armies still in training was not in a position to be "ready for anything big for some months."⁴¹ Thus he immediately suggested to Churchill that only some form of naval action, perhaps threatening Constantinople via the Dardanelles, was possible. Churchill's response, after discussion with Fisher, was to signal Vice Admiral Sackville Carden, commanding the Aegean Squadron, asking, "whether you consider the forcing of the Dardanelles by ships alone a practicable operation."⁴² Carden's reply on January 5, 1915 indicated that this could be done "by extended operations with [a] large number of ships." In a later signal received on January 11th, Carden outlined a methodical four-phase plan that saw the gradual destruction of the Turkish forts at the mouth of the Straits and at the Narrows combined with minesweeping and action against mobile batteries.⁴³ Losses were to be expected but the

⁴⁰ Sir George Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey January 1, 1915, quoted in Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 359/60.

⁴¹ Lord Kitchener to Winston Churchill, January 2, 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 360/61.

⁴² Winston Churchill to Vice Admiral Carden, January 3, 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 367.

⁴³ Vice Admiral Carden to Winston Churchill, January 5, 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 380. The Dardanelles Strait narrows in width to sixteen hundred yards some fourteen miles beyond its mouth. The mouth of the Strait was guarded by Turkish forts at Kum Kale (Asiatic side) and Sedd-el-Bahr (Gallipoli side) with the Narrows guarded by the forts of Çhanak (Asiatic side) and Kilid Bahr (Gallipoli side). In addition to the static Ottoman era forts, the Turks deployed by March 1915 eleven lines of contact mines, three torpedo tubes, and twenty four batteries of

operation was considered feasible and had a chance of success. Hence, by the time the War Council renewed its meetings in the New Year of 1915 not only were many of its members looking east (or at least away from the Western Front) but also one of its key allies was crying out for assistance. Fortunately, it appeared that the Admiralty had, up its sleeve, a workable plan that did not require the assistance of the overstretched Army.⁴⁴

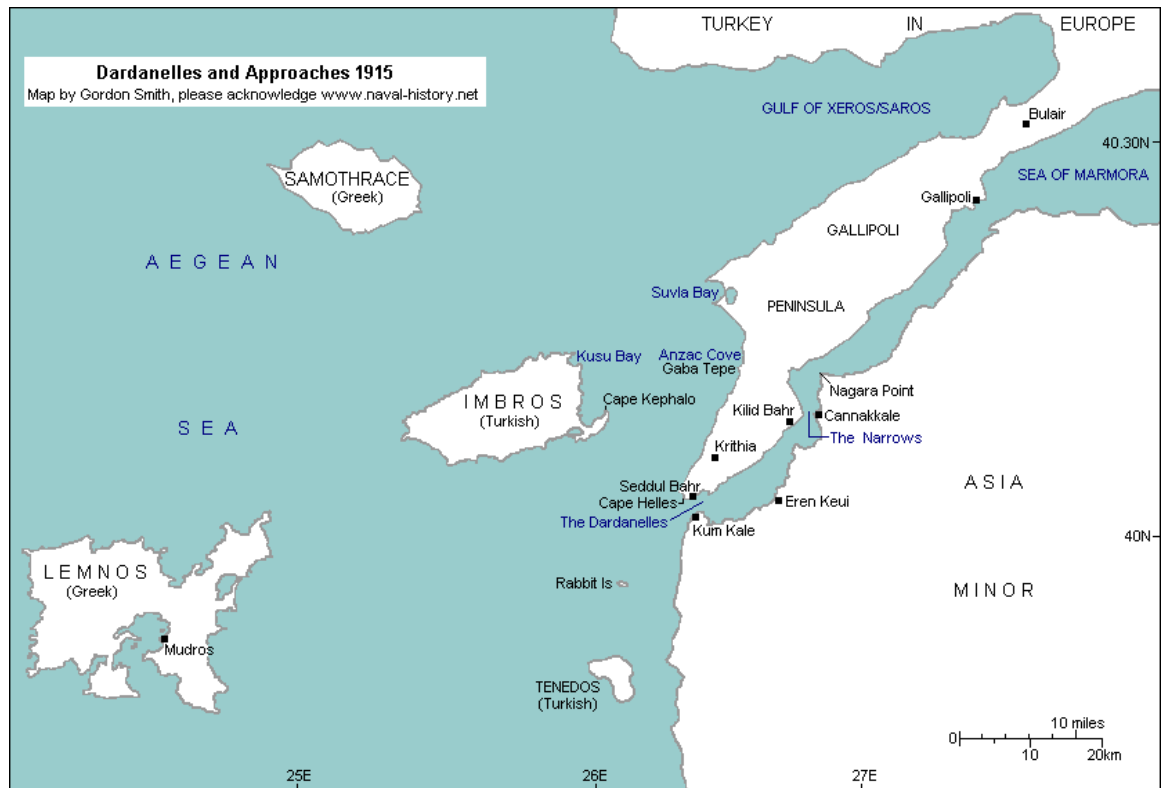


Figure 3. Detail of the Dardanelles and Approaches 1915. Map by Gordon Smith of <http://www.naval-history.net>, accessed January 6, 2015.

mobile field howitzers sited to cover the minefields.

⁴⁴ Ironically, by the time the War Council met the pressure on the Russians, which had been caused by an apparently highly successful Turkish invasion of the Caucasus, had abated. The Turks overextended themselves and the Russians, aided by the Turkish failure to prepare their forces adequately for extreme cold and mountainous warfare, defeated them soundly at Sarikamish. News of this Russian success was slow in emerging in the West and does not, in any case, appear to have had any discernible impact on British decision-making.

The first War Council meeting of 1915, on January 7th, did not uncover this increasing appetite to, as Lloyd George put it in a verbal sally that was not taken up by his Council colleagues, “get at the enemy from some other direction.”⁴⁵ Instead, the Council discussed the general policy of the war in light of Field Marshal Sir John French’s (Commander of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in France and Belgium) request for substantial reinforcement for the BEF to allow it to advance on and take Zeebrugge. It is significant, and speaks to the growing political discontent over the wastage on the Western Front, that the Council refused this reinforcement and vetoed French’s Zeebrugge plan in toto. The Council, on the other hand, was taken with the Admiralty’s plan for seizing Borkum and directed Churchill to conduct detailed planning.

The next day, January 8, 1915, offers more of substance. Clearly frustrated by the lack of opportunity the previous day to develop his grand strategic thoughts, Lloyd George expounded on the thesis of his December 31st memo and strongly recommended an attack on Austria from the south. This time the War Council were of a mind to discuss taking a broader approach to the war and Lloyd George’s comments sparked further comment despite the PM striking an early blow for armchair grand strategy by ruling out one of Lloyd George’s options based on Asquith’s summer holidays in 1913.⁴⁶ Seemingly tiring of political amateurs impinging upon his area of military expertise Kitchener was next to speak. In a lengthy (for Kitchener, who was usually the soul of brevity and occasionally monosyllabic in Council meetings) discourse Kitchener largely refuted all of Lloyd George’s options. He ruled out an attack from Italy, from Ragusa or from Salonica for a variety of reasons, primarily logistical, before leaping straight into Hankey’s way

⁴⁵ CAB 42, 42/1/11, 5.

⁴⁶ Lloyd George had suggested Ragusa (modern Dubrovnik) as a potential jumping off point for an attack on Austria however Asquith, who had visited Ragusa during an Adriatic cruise in 1913, pointed out its limited rail and road links to the interior.

of thinking by admitting that if the War Council's members really wished to take action outside France then:

“The Dardanelles appeared to be the most suitable objective, as an attack here could be made in cooperation with the Fleet. If successful it would re-establish communications with Russia; settle the Near Eastern question; draw in Greece and, perhaps, Roumania [sic]; and release wheat and shipping now locked up in the Black Sea.”⁴⁷

Interestingly Churchill immediately suggested that any course of action in this emerging southern theatre should “form the subject of careful Staff examinations.”⁴⁸ Nor can it be claimed that Kitchener's intervention, at this point, did anything more than keep the Dardanelles in the War Council's eye line. Immediately after his statement, proceedings moved on to cover Kitchener's favored Mediterranean venture of an attack on Alexandretta⁴⁹ to “strike an effective blow at the Turkish communications with Syria” and then on to discuss another of Churchill's northern options, the possibility of bringing Holland into the war on the Allied side.⁵⁰ However, the tectonic plates of British grand strategic thought can be seen to be in motion and are best captured perhaps, in a dispatch to French drafted by Kitchener on the War Council's behalf capturing the essentials of the discussions on January 8th. While it reaffirms the basic principle “that the main theatre of operations for British forces should be alongside the French army” the dispatch reveals that should the Western Front remain deadlocked, it might “be considered desirable to find some other theatre where such obstacles to advance would be less pronounced”.⁵¹

⁴⁷ CAB 42, 42/1/12, 3.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁹ Now İskenderun in Turkey and of significance in 1915 due to its proximity to the ‘Berlin-Baghdad railway’ that was Turkey's main supply route between the western and eastern parts of the Ottoman Empire.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 3.

⁵¹ Ibid., 6.

Readers will recall that Carden's methodical four phase naval plan for reducing the Turkish defences at the Dardanelles was received at the Admiralty on January 11th. One leading historian has described the reaction there vividly:

"Churchill's advisors shared his excitement at the one conclusion which could be drawn from Admiral Carden's telegram: the Royal Navy was in a position to destroy Turkey at a single blow, to relieve Russia, to provide the bait with which to force each Balkan State to turn against the Central Powers, and by the rapid exploitation of victory on the southern flank to bring the whole war to an end."⁵²

The Admiralty War Group immediately discussed the proposition in detail and, without a dissenting voice, allocated to it a number of obsolescent pre-Dreadnought class battleships. These ships were felt to be of limited utility in modern fleet engagements, "ships that can neither fight nor run away" in Fisher's colorful prose.⁵³ In addition, Fisher suggested including the brand new battleship HMS *Queen Elizabeth*, with her 15in guns, which could conduct her initial gunnery exercises "at the Dardanelles forts instead of uselessly into the ocean at Gibraltar."⁵⁴ Concurrently, Churchill circulated Carden's telegram to the War Council in advance of their meeting the next day. The stage was set for a decision.

Low Risk High Gain

The War Council meeting of January 13th was something of a marathon. Field Marshal French had again been summoned to London discuss his plans for the impending resumption of major operations in the West. Debate over the merits of operating along the Belgian coast towards Zeebrugge in support of General Joffre's (the French CinC) planned offensive in the Champagne region further south occupied much of the day. As the day wore on Lloyd George and,

⁵² Martin Gilbert, "Churchill and Gallipoli," in *Gallipoli: Making History*, ed. Jenny Macleod (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 25.

⁵³ Lord Fisher to Winston Churchill, December 21, 1914, quoted in Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 322/3.

⁵⁴ Lord Fisher to Vice-Admiral Oliver, January 12, 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 406.

increasingly, Balfour began to display impatience with French's plan. At length however the War Council agreed, wearily and with caveats, to support the plan and authorized preparations to be made to send two additional Territorial Army⁵⁵ Divisions to the BEF pending a final decision on both their deployment and the overall viability of the operation in February. This decided and, with the evening drawing in, Grey, took the opportunity of the hiatus before the War Council would be required to ratify French's plan by asking the Admiralty to consider operations in the Adriatic "with the object of drawing Italy into the war." He also asked the wider War Council to study possible options for action in the event of stalemate in the West perhaps alongside the Serbs or even "an attack on the Gallipoli Peninsula."⁵⁶ This unexpected and possibly even impromptu remark gave Churchill an opening to outline the Carden plan for the systematic clearance of the Dardanelles defences using a force of aging ships which could be made available "without reducing our strength in the main theatre of war." This offered the enticing prospect of a quick and relatively bloodless operation freeing the Fleet to "proceed up to Constantinople and destroy the *Goeben*."⁵⁷

For a War Council which had, for most of the day, been facing up to the prospect of a protracted and bloody trudge towards Zeebrugge as a minor adjunct to a French main effort in the West and to a War Council which had grown up in an age of unchallenged maritime dominance by the RN, this new idea must have seemed like the answer to a maiden's prayer. Hankey later recorded the scene; "The idea caught on at once. The whole atmosphere changed. Fatigue was forgotten. The War Council turned eagerly from the dreary vista of a 'slogging match' on the

⁵⁵ Pre-war volunteer Army reservists mobilized for permanent service for the War, as opposed to the Regular Army or the New Armies made up of personnel who volunteered for service since the outbreak of war.

⁵⁶ CAB 42, 42/1/16, 8.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

Western Front to brighter prospects...in the Mediterranean.”⁵⁸ His minutes, while somewhat more prosaic, nevertheless reveal that Lloyd George, despite a continuing preference for action against Austria, pronounced that he was all in favor and Kitchener “thought it was worth trying” adding the important rider that Britain could “leave off the bombardment if it did not prove effective.”⁵⁹

Whilst the remainder of the meeting returned, without further debate on the Dardanelles, to other theatres and other matters⁶⁰ the final word was left to the PM who set about drafting the conclusions from this lengthy and, in strategic planning terms, seminal, War Council meeting. Having attended to the point about being prepared to support the Zeebrugge operation and directing the Admiralty to ponder operations in the Adriatic to put pressure on Italy, Asquith’s third conclusion stated “that the Admiralty should also prepare for a naval operation in February to bombard and take the Gallipoli peninsula, with Constantinople as its objective.”⁶¹ The game was on.

It is useful, at this point, to consider what sort of game was envisioned. It would appear from the primary sources that no one in power yet contemplated a major amphibious assault and occupation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. There is no suggestion that the Dardanelles enterprise was anything more than a subsidiary operation, redolent with possibilities perhaps, but secondary to Britain’s combined campaign with the French against the main, and most dangerous, enemy in the West. Churchill, often cast as the main or at least most vocal advocate of the Dardanelles,

⁵⁸ Lord Maurice Hankey, *The Supreme Command 1914-1918, vol. I* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971), 265/6.

⁵⁹ CAB 42, 42/1/16, 9.

⁶⁰ Including another attempt by Churchill to resurrect interest in his plan to bring Holland into the war on the allied side – which speaks volumes over his commitment to the Dardanelles as anything other than a subsidiary operation at this point.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

remained focused elsewhere as his remarks to the War Council late in proceedings on January 13th that “we ought not to go South until we are satisfied that we can do nothing in the North” makes clear.⁶² Moreover, given that Kitchener had already made it plain that he could spare no troops for any other theatre at present, the concept of operations was entirely naval. Long and, later, short range bombardment of the Turkish defences, minesweeping action and, if necessary, limited Royal Marines (RM) landings to put beyond use Turkish forts and guns already damaged by naval gunfire were the order of the day. A recent historian sums up the collective view at the end of the War Council meeting by saying “that there was little to be lost in an option that diverted no troops or ships (of any consequence) from the main theatre of war. In that sense Britain’s decision makers had not made a decision of any vast consequence.”⁶³

Doubts Surface

In that spirit the Admiralty threw itself into preparations for their offensive, reinforcing Carden’s fleet, preparing expert gunnery advice and, in Churchill’s case, drafting telegrams to the French and Russians explaining the plan and asking for assistance.⁶⁴ However, this period of intense activity brought to the surface significant concerns, particularly in the First Sea Lord, that the Dardanelles operation could not, in fact, be confined to a solely naval scheme and that the RN could ill afford the losses that might accrue. Fisher’s concerns began to manifest themselves in comments on the disposition of the Grand Fleet and particularly its loss to the Dardanelles theatre

⁶² CAB 42, 42/1/16, 9.

⁶³ Robin Prior, *Gallipoli: The End of the Myth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 19.

⁶⁴ Which was rapidly forthcoming in the case of the former who offered squadrons for both the Dardanelles and Alexandretta (presumably in order to ensure that Britain was not given a free hand in areas where the French considered they had national interests as much as to shore up the alliance) but not from the latter who offered their full moral support but complained that their fleet was not yet ready for such undertakings.

of three battle cruisers and a destroyer flotilla “all urgently required at the decisive theatre at home!”⁶⁵ Such concerns even made their way to the ear of the PM (by way of Hankey, a close friend of the First Sea Lord’s) who informed Venetia Stanley that Fisher was “not by any means at ease about either the present disposition of the fleets, or their future movements.”⁶⁶ A further pointer to Fisher’s hardening attitude surfaced in another letter to Admiral Jellicoe on January 21st that contained a plea for the Dardanelles “to be made a military operation, with 200,000 men in conjunction with the Fleet.”⁶⁷ These concerns were not communicated directly to Churchill but they do help to explain one of the more bizarre episodes in the history of the campaign that will be recounted next.



Figure 4. Churchill and Fisher in Whitehall, early 1915. Photograph by permission of <http://www.en.academic.ru> accessed February 2, 2015.

⁶⁵ Lord Fisher to Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, CinC British Grand Fleet, January 19, 1915, quoted in, Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 429.

⁶⁶ H. H. Asquith to Venetia Stanley, January 20, 1915, quoted in, *ibid.*, 431.

⁶⁷ Lord Fisher to Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, CinC British Grand Fleet, January 19, 1915, quoted in, *ibid.*, 436.

On January 25th, Fisher wrote to Churchill enclosing a lengthy maritime appreciation entitled ‘Memorandum by the First Sea Lord on the position of the British Fleet and its policy of steady pressure’. His covering note asked Churchill to circulate the appreciation to the War Council as Fisher wished his views exposed to prevent him, as he saw it, having “to continue a useless resistance in the War Council to plans I cannot concur in.”⁶⁸ In essence, the appreciation espoused the traditional British ‘Blue Water’ school of strategic thought. This concept saw Britain as a maritime not a continental power and therefore that the RN should be its main offensive arm. Fisher was an ardent believer in the necessity for a climactic confrontation between the main battle fleets of the opposing sides that, in his view self-evidently; the numerically superior and manifestly better-handled British Grand Fleet would win. However, as the Germans were currently reluctant to come out and fight that battle the RN’s power and superiority should be employed in enforcing the close blockade of German trade until “the gradual pressure of sea power compels the enemy’s fleet to make an attempt to attack us at a disadvantage.”⁶⁹ It was imperative in the meantime, in Fisher’s view, not to dissipate the RN’s strength on peripheral operations unless such operations were conducted in concert with the Army, an Army currently occupied in France where, again in Fisher’s view, “it no more helps the Navy than if it were in Timbuctoo.”⁷⁰ The logic of Fisher’s case is debatable to say the least given the nature of the war and Britain’s alliance obligations but the memo is instructive concerning his increasingly agitated state of mind.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Lord Fisher to Winston Churchill, January 25, 1915, quoted in, Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 451.

⁶⁹ Lord Fisher, Memo, quoted in, *ibid.*, 453.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 454.

⁷¹ Fisher may have been impelled to write by the Battle of Dogger Bank on January 24th, that, while it saw the sinking of the German warship *Blücher*, identified significant weaknesses in the British fleet’s tactics and laydown.

For Churchill, although he may have had more than an inkling of Fisher's concerns over the Dardanelles, this memo was something of a shock. While he wrote a short note to mollify and encourage his First Sea Lord, he refused to circulate the memo to the War Council, referring it solely to the PM. Asquith agreed to meet Churchill and Fisher together on the morning on January 28th, with a War Council meeting that afternoon. Fisher, at this point, offered his resignation to Churchill rather than break the Admiralty's "unity of purpose" and, at last, stated his concerns direct to his political master in unambiguous terms; "I make no objection to either Zeebrugge or the Dardanelles if accompanied by military cooperation...and no drain thereby on [the] Grand Fleet Margin."⁷² Concurrently Fisher wrote to Asquith along very similar lines. Churchill, by now used to Fisher's resignation tactics, ignored the offer and directed him to appear at both the War Council and before the PM as planned. Asquith, however, misjudged the essence of Fisher's concern and believed that Fisher was objecting to the Dardanelles not on principle, but rather as a tactical measure designed to ensure the Navy had the capacity to take forward his Baltic schemes. Thus, Asquith was able to boast that he had persuaded Fisher and Churchill "to compose their differences by a compromise, under which Winston was to give up for the present his bombardment of Zeebrugge, Fisher withdrawing his opposition to the operation against the Dardanelles."⁷³

The PM is likely to have been surprised, therefore, at Fisher's behavior during the War Council meeting later that day. Late in proceedings, after Kitchener had lead the Council in reviewing the global military situation, Churchill reported progress on Admiralty planning for the

⁷² Lord Fisher to Winston Churchill, quoted in, Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 460. The offer of resignation, to "revert to roses at Richmond," should not be overplayed. Fisher was a serial resigner and had already attempted resignation twice in 1915 alone on various matters. He would do so at least once more before actually resigning in May 1915.

⁷³ H.H.Asquith to Venetia Stanley, January 28, 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 462.

Dardanelles operation. He stated that bombardment could commence by mid-February and asked the War Council to confirm whether it “attached importance to this operation, which undoubtedly involved some risks?”⁷⁴ Fisher, at this point, interjected saying that he considered this issue had been dealt with and was not to be raised, upon which note he left the table and made to leave the building. Kitchener followed him and, after some discussion, persuaded him to remain.

Surprisingly this awkward moment, involving the senior serving sailor in the country and clearly bearing on his views, one way or the other, on the Dardanelles operation, does not appear to have drawn much attention or comment from the rest of the War Council. Rather than publically enquire of the First Sea Lord the nature of his views, the War Council instead broadened and deepened its support for the operation. Kitchener “considered the naval attack to be vitally important” and again highlighted the benefit of the plan in the event that it suffered a setback it could quietly be “broken off” without excessive loss of face.⁷⁵ Balfour, hitherto silent on the subject, was positively effusive in setting out the potential benefits:

“It would cut the Turkish Army in two; it would put Constantinople under our control; it would give us the advantage of having the Russian wheat, and enable Russia to resume exports; this would restore the Russian exchanges, which were falling owing to her inability to export, and causing great embarrassment; it would also open a passage to the Danube. It was difficult to imagine a more helpful operation.”

Even the Foreign Minister, Grey, could now see the diplomatic benefits; adding, “it would finally settle the attitude of Bulgaria and the whole of the Balkans.” Nor was this to be Grey’s final comment of the day for, having been briefed by Churchill on the plan in detail, he is recorded as having “thought that the Turks would be paralyzed with fear when they heard that the forts were being destroyed one by one.”⁷⁶ That no one in the War Council sought to question this

⁷⁴ CAB 42, 42/1/26, 5.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

comment gives a fair idea of the British view of the fighting qualities and fortitude of the Ottoman Empire at this time.

By the end of January 1915, therefore, the Dardanelles Campaign, as a purely naval operation using expendable ships had the enthusiastic backing of the majority of the War Cabinet and the strong support of the PM. The First Sea Lord was not, perhaps, strongly in favor, but in the political forum at least, he had voiced no objection. The proposed operation had a wealth of possible benefits not the least of which was that if things went awry in the naval domain then the effort could be called off without the appearance of a military reversal. So, from London and Paris's point of view, the perennial 'sick man of Europe' needed only the shove of a few elderly battleships at his western gates to topple him.

Six weeks later, however a senior and respected British General was hurtling through France, on a specially chartered train to catch a RN destroyer laid on for the purpose, to command the Constantinople Expeditionary Force.⁷⁷ The last remaining uncommitted British regular division, the XXIXth Division (hereafter 29 Div), previously earmarked for France, had been diverted as part of a multinational force of almost one hundred thousand British, French, Indian, Australian and New Zealand troops en route to the Aegean. Yet the navy had not yet even conducted a concerted attempt to reduce the Dardanelles defences at the Narrows and had certainly not suffered any particular reverse. What had changed?

Prestige and Press

The answer, put simply, is very little. Certainly, the War Council never made a conscious decision that the nature of the proposed operation had changed so significantly as to have become a combined operation involving a military invasion. It must be noted, however, as shall be

⁷⁷ The name, a masterstroke of operational security so egregious that the Turks initially assumed it part of a misinformation effort, was quickly changed to Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (MEF).

returned to, that it would have been difficult for them to do so in the absence of coherent professional military advice suggesting such a course of action. Instead, the answer seems to lie in the intermingling of three factors. First, both in terms of timing and significance, the emergence, or rather revealing, of significant concerns within the Admiralty and elsewhere over the efficacy of a naval only attack. Second, Kitchener's view that, after all, some troops might be available to support the navy. Finally, a growing sense fuelled by the British press, that Imperial prestige generally and in the East in particular demanded that the operation was seen through to a successful conclusion.

Fisher's strongly held view on the necessity for troops, be they Greek or Allied, to support the navy has already been described and he maintained this view even after the War Council's January 28th meeting reminding Churchill the next day "not a grain of wheat will come from the Black Sea unless there is military occupation of the Dardanelles!"⁷⁸ His was not a lone voice in the Admiralty and the inclusion of two RM Light Infantry (RMLI) battalions in Carden's order of battle on February 6th for limited landing operations was a further indication of concern.⁷⁹ Rather more direct was the voice of Admiral Sir Henry Jackson who, along with Vice Admiral Oliver, had been tasked with assisting Carden's operational planning. In a memo of February 13th Jackson, while in no doubt that a naval bombardment would result in some warships passing through the Straits, nevertheless concluded that:

"The naval bombardment is not recommended as a sound military operation, unless a strong military force is ready to assist in the operation or, at least, follow it up immediately the forts are silenced."⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Lord Fisher to Winston Churchill, January 29, 1915, quoted in: Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 471.

⁷⁹ The intent was that such landings would be primarily undertaken to put beyond use Turkish guns damaged or abandoned during the bombardments and not to secure permanent lodgments on the Gallipoli peninsula.

⁸⁰ Sir Henry Jackson, memorandum, February 13th, quoted in, *ibid.*, 506-512.

The concern of some in the Admiralty was shared elsewhere. The ever industrious and increasingly influential Hankey had already written to Asquith on February 2nd reminding him of Fisher's concern that "the navy can perhaps open the Dardanelles and Bosphorus to warships...but they cannot open these channels to merchant ships so long as the enemy is in possession of the shores" and therefore a military occupation of the Gallipoli Peninsula was recommended.⁸¹ No less a figure than the great naval historian Sir Julian Corbett weighed in, at Hankey's request, reminding Hankey of the outcome of Admiral Duckworth's successful forcing of the Dardanelles in 1807.⁸² The stance of Fisher and some of his Admiralty colleagues was clearly gaining traction at this juncture and on February 10th Hankey wrote to Balfour in unequivocal terms:

"From Lord Fisher downwards every naval officer in the Admiralty...believes that the Navy cannot take the Dardanelles position without troops. The First Lord still professes to believe that they can do it with ships, but I have warned the Prime Minister that we cannot trust to this..."⁸³

Kitchener, to date the advocate of minimal military involvement due to pressing requirements elsewhere was also changing his attitude. Evidence of this can be found in his comments at the War Council of February 9th, which was focused primarily on the proposal to support the ailing Serbians via the Greek port of Salonica. Not only did he now admit that perhaps 29 Div could be made available for operations in the East after all but also that "it might be very useful to the Navy in their attack on the Dardanelles to have some good troops at Salonica." More tellingly, he assured Churchill at the same meeting "that, if the Navy required

⁸¹ CAB 42, 42/1/30, 2.

⁸² On this occasion, despite military advice to embark an occupation force of ten thousand troops, Duckworth forced his fleet through the Dardanelles defences by naval means alone and appeared off Constantinople hoping to cow the Ottomans into surrender. When this did not occur and with the Ottomans having repaired the defences in the meantime, Duckworth had to fight his way back out of the Dardanelles incurring significant losses in the process. CAB 42, 42/1/32, February 5, 1915, 1.

⁸³ Lieutenant Colonel Hankey to AJ Balfour, February 10, 1915, quoted in: Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 500.

the assistance of the land forces...that assistance would be forthcoming.”⁸⁴ Churchill, for his part, cannot fail but to have been influenced by the hardening views of his senior Naval advisors and the growing groundswell of wider opinion that perhaps, after all, it might be prudent to have troops on hand, if only to mop up after the fleet had broken through. This, certainly, came to be the PM’s belief as he revealed to Venetia Stanley. Acknowledging the influence of Hankey, Asquith told his paramour that he too felt that the fleet “should be supported by landing a fairly strong military force.”⁸⁵

It comes as very little surprise, therefore, that at an informal War Council meeting on February 16th it was decided to dispatch 29 Div, a yet unspecified force from Egypt, shipping, and boats for fifty thousand troops to the Aegean “in case of necessity to support the naval attack on the Dardanelles.”⁸⁶ The decision was exposed to the full War Council on February 19th together with the news that the naval bombardment had begun. Churchill revealed that he had issued orders for the ten thousand man Royal Naval Division⁸⁷ to deploy to Lemnos⁸⁸ and Kitchener outlined the plan to move thirty thousand troops of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) there from Egypt. He was less keen now to dispatch 29 Div as the Russian situation in East Prussia had deteriorated and the division might be required for the Western Front should Germany be able to take advantage of Russian weakness and transfer forces

⁸⁴ CAB 42, 42/1/33, 4-5.

⁸⁵ H.H. Asquith to Venetia Stanley, February 13, 1915, quoted in: Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 512.

⁸⁶ A truncated war Council with only Asquith, Churchill, Kitchener, Lloyd George, Fisher, and Grey in attendance. No minutes were taken and only the conclusions were recorded by Hankey whom the PM briefed verbally after the meeting. CAB 42, 42/1/35.

⁸⁷ Three Brigades of RM and RN personnel surplus to requirement for the fleet.

⁸⁸ An island in the northern Aegean, some 50 km from the Gallipoli peninsula. Its main harbor, Mudros, was to become one of the main Allied forward mounting bases during the campaign.

westward. Nevertheless, with the addition of a French Division that had been offered, Kitchener was content that there would be sufficient troops on hand to support the navy in the Dardanelles. What did not, at any time, become clear during this meeting or subsequently, was the exact purpose of these troops. Despite the manful efforts of the Lord Chancellor, R.M. Haldane who repeatedly asked Kitchener to define “the precise purpose for which they are to be used” no consensus was reached.⁸⁹ Robin Prior’s summary of the situation is admirable:

“In fact no thought had been given by the War Council as to what these troops were to do. Members of the Council probably thought that they might mop up a number of guns not destroyed by the fleet or be used as occupation forces after the Turks had surrendered. None of this was stated, it was all left desperately vague.”⁹⁰

Thus, it can be seen that a growing body of opinion in favor of having a military force on hand combined with the discovery that the Army could spare a suitably sized force from its duties elsewhere allowed the War Council to authorize the deployment. What caused this decision to become irreversible, however, was not opinion or practicality, but rather prestige. It will be recalled that one of the major attractions of the naval only attack was the ability, should it not go as well as planned, for the British to cut their losses and simply walk – or rather steam – away. No great ‘blood and treasure’ would have been expended, no army defeated and the entire episode could have been explained away as a probe. The world, and particularly the Muslim world, and especially the Muslim subjects of the British Empire, would have no cause to doubt British strength and resolve. As events moved forward, and particularly after the opening of the naval bombardment on February 19th, it is possible to detect first a sense and then a stated policy that the British government no longer regarded the Dardanelles offensive as something it could let drop.

⁸⁹ CAB 42, 42/1/36, 4.

⁹⁰ Prior, *Gallipoli*, 31.

In order to understand fully the role played by the fear of lost prestige it is necessary to examine the history and underpinning philosophy of Britain's eastern Empire, particular India, Egypt and the broader Middle East. The Indian Mutiny of 1857 had brought into stark and terrifying focus the essential fact that the British "were an isolated minority governing a potentially hostile population."⁹¹ Their tactic for dealing with this situation was to enlist the support of a relatively small number of native collaborators, employ them as well rewarded administrators and soldiers and rely on the rest of the population simply to accept British domination without demur. This "balance of apathy and acquiescence" however could only be perpetuated if the majority were convinced of British moral and physical supremacy and could rely on just and efficient rule.⁹² This situation was particularly crucial in areas with a significant Muslim population as here, not only were the British in a minority, but also there was a potential alternative source of authority, the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire in his guise as the Caliph of Islam. Therefore the 1906 General Staff appreciation of offensive options against the Ottoman Empire was simply following the accepted wisdom in pointing out that it was "quite within the bounds of possibility that a reverse to a British fleet, or the repulse of an expeditionary force attempting to effect a landing upon Turkish soil would be followed by a general uprising against British authority throughout the East."⁹³ This paper, it will be noted, was circulated around the War Council by Hankey in February 1915 but, even without the reminder, none of the War Council members would have been in any doubt over the prestige issue.

As has been seen, Churchill announced to the War Council on February 19th that the bombardment of the outer forts had begun and that phase one of Carden's plan was underway.

⁹¹ David French, "The Dardanelles, Mecca and Kut: Prestige as a factor in British Eastern Strategy 1914-16." *War and Society*, vol. 5, no. 1 (May 1987), 45.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ CAB 4/2/92B, 1906, 14.

The next day the Admiralty issued a Press communique, probably on the request of the Foreign Office⁹⁴ and by Monday February 22nd *The Times* was running a leading article, with two front-page columns of maps, orders of battle, and diagrams, describing what its influential military correspondent, Colonel Repington, characterized as a daring and imaginative attack. It also stated the planned objectives of forcing the Straits and ended with an exhortation that “the one thing that the allied dare not risk...is failure.”⁹⁵ The twin forces of fear of domestic popular opinion and loss of imperial prestige together with a palpable sense of confidence in the RN were apparent in the War Councils of late February. Despite the weather hampering the offensive effort at the Dardanelles, the War Council on February 24th again discussed the theatre. Churchill was now of the view that, although he had no doubt that the navy would get through as planned, some limited local land operations may be necessary to assist the navy. He assured the Council that “with a comparatively small number of troops we might be in Constantinople by the end of March” whilst at the same time observing that “we were now absolutely committed to seeing through the attack on the Dardanelles.”⁹⁶ Kitchener’s reaction was palpable, and probably justifiable, surprise asking sharply “if Mr. Churchill now contemplated a land attack?” while Lloyd George, still keener on Salonica than the Dardanelles “hoped that the Army would not be required or expected

⁹⁴ There is historical controversy on this issue largely resting on whether it represented an example of deliberate Churchillian self-aggrandizement, based on Lloyd George’s criticism of Churchill in a later letter to Frances Stevenson (his secretary and future wife), or possibly an underhand attempt to extract troops from Kitchener, or whether it was forced upon a reluctant Admiralty as suggested by a note from Fisher to Jellicoe on February 22nd. Fisher commented, “it is all Foreign Office business and pressure from Russia and France.” For more detail see: T. Curran, “Who was responsible for the Dardanelles naval fiasco?” *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 57, no.1 (2011), 25-26, George H. Cassar, *Asquith as War Leader* (London: Hambleton Continuum, 1994), 68 and Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 544.

⁹⁵ Quoted in: T. Higgins, *Winston Churchill and the Dardanelles* (London: Heinemann, 1963), 144.

⁹⁶ CAB 42, 42/1/42, 4.

to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the Navy.”⁹⁷ By the end of the meeting, however, the issue of prestige seems to have changed Kitchener’s mind to the extent that he was recorded as saying that “if the fleet would not get through the straits unaided, the Army ought to see the business through.” Moreover, drawing on his wide Imperial experience in the Middle East he pronounced, “the effect of a defeat in the Orient would be very serious. There could be no going back. The publicity of the announcement had committed us” – a clear reference to the impact of the press coverage.⁹⁸ The meeting closed with a decision to dispatch Lieutenant General W.R Birdwood, commanding the ANZAC Corps, to join Carden at the Dardanelles to begin considering joint military options in more detail. Unbeknownst to Kitchener, he had been playing against a stacked deck. Asquith revealed that the War Council was already “all agreed (except K) that the naval adventure in the Dardanelles shd [sic] be backed up by a strong military force” before the Council sat.⁹⁹ All that was needed was a push of sufficient strength and an appeal to his concerns over British prestige to draw him out.

Two days later, however, Kitchener was back in session with the War Council and much troubled by Russian reverses in Poland. His concern was such that he wished to retain the 29 Div in England as a strategic reserve. This led to something of a spat with Churchill who eventually declared, “if a disaster occurred in Turkey owing to insufficiency of troops, he must disclaim all responsibility.”¹⁰⁰ This statement is often produced as evidence that Churchill’s faith in a naval only operation was waning however this view overstates the case. It is clear from Churchill’s comments elsewhere that his concern was whether there would be sufficient British troops

⁹⁷ Ibid., 4-5.

⁹⁸ CAB 42, 42/1/42, 5.

⁹⁹ H.H. Asquith to Venetia Stanley, February 24, 1915, quoted in: Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 554.

¹⁰⁰ CAB 42, 42/1/47, 5.

immediately on hand to exploit the navy's success in forcing the Straits. Such troops could be employed occupying and clearing the Gallipoli Peninsula to permit unarmored vessels to pass through the Dardanelles, or by being available to occupy Constantinople once the Turkish Army surrendered – as all in the War Council (apart from Lloyd George) confidently continued to expect.

In fact so strongly held was the view that Turkey would collapse once the fleet appeared off Constantinople that the War Council spent much of the rest of February and early March planning what to do with the spoils of their impending victory. Churchill proposed “nothing less than the surrender of everything Turkish in Europe” and an immediate armistice, on allied terms, with Turkey in Asia.¹⁰¹ The Foreign Office endeavored to coax Greece into the war by reminding her that she had better join the allies before Constantinople fell in order to guarantee a share of the dividends. On March 1st Hankey produced a lengthy and typically clear and detailed paper for the War Council entitled “After the Dardanelles. The Next Steps” and this paper formed part of the agenda for the War Council's meeting on March 3rd.¹⁰² This meeting further raked over options in the event of a rapid Turkish collapse. Churchill even suggested that the surrendered Turkish Army should be employed by the allies as mercenaries with Lloyd George adding further surrealism by pointing out that the Turks were of little value as mercenaries and were only ever effective at home – in which latter point he was to be proved right over the course of the campaign. Only the PM sounded a note of caution reminding the assembly that “the Turks and their German masters would not give in easily.”¹⁰³ However, even Asquith's caution seems to have evaporated as he took the unparalleled step of inviting Andrew Bonar-Law, the Leader of

¹⁰¹ Winston Churchill to Sir Edward Grey, February 28, 1915, quoted in: Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 591.

¹⁰² CAB 42, 42/2/1.

¹⁰³ CAB 42, 42/2/3, 5.

the Opposition and Lord Lansdowne, the Tory leader in the House of Lords, to the War Council's March 10th meeting specifically to ensure that any decisions taken on the future of Constantinople and the Ottoman Empire generally had cross party support. This meeting was also important for two other reasons. The first was Kitchener's announcement that, with the Russian situation improving, he felt able, after all, to dispatch 29 Div to the Mediterranean. The second, which had been discussed on March 3rd but which required the decision to send the 29 Div to confirm it, was that General Sir Ian Hamilton would be sent to supersede Birdwood at the Dardanelles. This situation was made necessary by the French selecting a general senior to Birdwood (General D'Amade) as the commander of their division in the MEF.

The War Council's increasing confidence was not simply fueled by their poor opinion of Turkish martial ability and resilience, nor by the strength of Churchill's confidence in the RN. Throughout the period since the opening bombardment on February 19th there was every indication that Carden's plan was progressing well, if perhaps a little slowly. February 20th found Kitchener informing CinC Egypt, General Sir John Maxwell that the navy "have silenced one fort and severely damaged another."¹⁰⁴ Despite poor weather conditions Carden's force continued to make progress allowing Churchill to report to the War Council on February 26th that "all the outer forts were now reduced, minesweeping had commenced," and the next day his confidence was such that he telegraphed the Russian CinC, Grand Duke Nicholas advising him to prepare the Russian Black Sea fleet for an attack on the Bosphorus once the RN entered the Sea of Marmara.¹⁰⁵ News of this progress was even reported favorably to Buckingham Palace on March 9th, with Asquith telling King George V of the navy's "steady progress."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Lord Kitchener to Sir John Maxwell, February 20, 1915, quoted in: Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 537.

¹⁰⁵ CAB 42, 42/1/47, 1.

¹⁰⁶ H.H. Asquith to King George V, March 9, 1915, quoted in: Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 659.

The Fleet Recoils

Such optimism masked real and growing concerns, particularly in the theatre, that forcing the Straits might be more costly than imagined. Not only was the weather proving awkward but, to many people's surprise, so was the enemy. It was becoming apparent that it was not sufficient to simply stand off and batter the fixed fortifications from range. To complete the destruction of the forts required the landing of RN and RM shore parties to put the guns beyond use. Initially unopposed this practice was becoming more difficult as Turkish opposition grew. By early March these shore parties had grown from a few men to full-scale company plus operations. Even this was proving insufficient and on March 5th Carden reported to the Admiralty that two, simultaneous RM operations, on either side of the entrance to the Straits, "could make no progress...encountered enemy in a well concealed position and were forced to retire" at the cost of some twenty casualties.¹⁰⁷ In fact, this was to be the last time that British personnel were able to get ashore until the main landings on April 25th. Undoubtedly influenced by events of March 5th, Birdwood reported back to Kitchener that day that he was "very doubtful [that] the Navy can force the passage unassisted,"¹⁰⁸ and this, in turn, may well have influenced Kitchener in deciding to release the 29 Div for the MEF at the War Council on March 10th.

Getting ashore was not the navy's only problem. Both mines and mobile howitzers had been noted as problems in Carden's plan, but dealing with them was proving more difficult than expected. Carden's minesweeping force was composed of hastily commandeered North Sea fishing boats, complete with civilian crews and, not entirely surprisingly, these were not particularly effective, especially when under fire. Carden took steps to replace the civilian trawler

¹⁰⁷ Vice Admiral Carden telegram to Admiralty, March 5, 1915, quoted in, Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 637.

¹⁰⁸ Lieutenant General Birdwood telegram to Lord Kitchener, March 5, 1915, quoted in: *ibid.*, 637.

men with RN volunteers but inevitably progress slowed and, in any case, the underpowered boats made heavy weather of the 4 knot current running through the Straits against them. The mobile Turkish howitzers were a particular hazard for the unarmored minesweepers and, while initially described as an irritant to the warships, nevertheless required them continually to shift position, thus reducing the accuracy of their gunnery. They were also difficult to locate and, when they were, the navy found that shelling them from offshore was not as effective as hoped. Carden was locked into a vicious cycle. He knew that “gun fire alone will not render forts innocuous,” landing parties were required for detailed demolitions, but he could not get landing parties ashore with any ease.¹⁰⁹ His minesweepers could only clear the way for the battleships to attack the inner forts once the mobile batteries had been cleared and he could not get the battleships close enough to the mobile batteries, or the inner forts, until the mines had been cleared. Moreover, to cap his discomfort, not only was he suffering a chronic stomach complaint but also London was losing its patience.

On March 11th Churchill, perhaps frustrated by having had to report “not much news from the Dardanelles” and having yet again stated that the Admiralty remained confident that “they could effect the passage of the Straits by naval means alone” at the War Council the previous day, telegrammed Carden.¹¹⁰ Acknowledging that Carden’s original instructions had emphasized “caution and deliberate methods,” the First Lord nevertheless began to press for action, stressing that the time had come for a Naval push the results of which “would justify loss of ships and men” if necessary. Churchill amplified this urgency on March 13th in responding to a message from Carden that explained that minesweeping operations were proceeding slowly.

¹⁰⁹ Vice Admiral Carden telegram to Admiralty, March 10, 1915, quoted in: Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 661.

¹¹⁰ CAB 42, 42/2/5, 4.

Reacting to Carden's report that the minesweeping force had withdrawn despite suffering no casualties Churchill exhorted the Admiral to get on with the job "methodically and resolutely by day and night the unavoidable losses being accepted". Twenty-four hours later Churchill again directed Carden to make progress "without loss of time."¹¹¹ Carden took the hint and proposed a major attack seeking to clear the Narrows of mines and destroy the forts there as soon as the weather allowed. At this point, Carden's stomach problem reached crisis point – not propelled, but certainly not aided - by the pressure from the Admiralty, and he was placed on the sick list, handing over his command to his deputy, Rear Admiral John De Robeck.

Before Carden's untimely departure, Churchill had informed him that General Hamilton was en route to take command of the various army elements that were being gathered and had advised Carden to ensure that his planning was integrated with that of Hamilton. At this stage it would appear that the presumption remained that the Army would either be used to augment the small RM landing parties and destroy forts and guns damaged by naval bombardment or to occupy and clear the Gallipoli Peninsula once the navy had forced the Narrows. Privately, Churchill appears to have hoped that Hamilton, a trusted personal friend, would inject urgency and vigor into the operation. His public telegrams to both Carden and de Robeck abjuring them "to work in closest harmony with General Hamilton" reflect this confidence.¹¹² However they also had the effect, perhaps psychological, of vesting Hamilton with a degree of joint authority which was shortly to have an unintended consequence.

¹¹¹ Winston Churchill telegrams to Vice Admiral Carden, March 11, 13 and 14, 1915, quoted in: Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 677, 687 and 695.

¹¹² Winston Churchill telegram to Vice Admiral de Robeck, March 17, 1915, quoted in: *ibid.*, 706. De Robeck was promoted to Vice Admiral on March 17th.

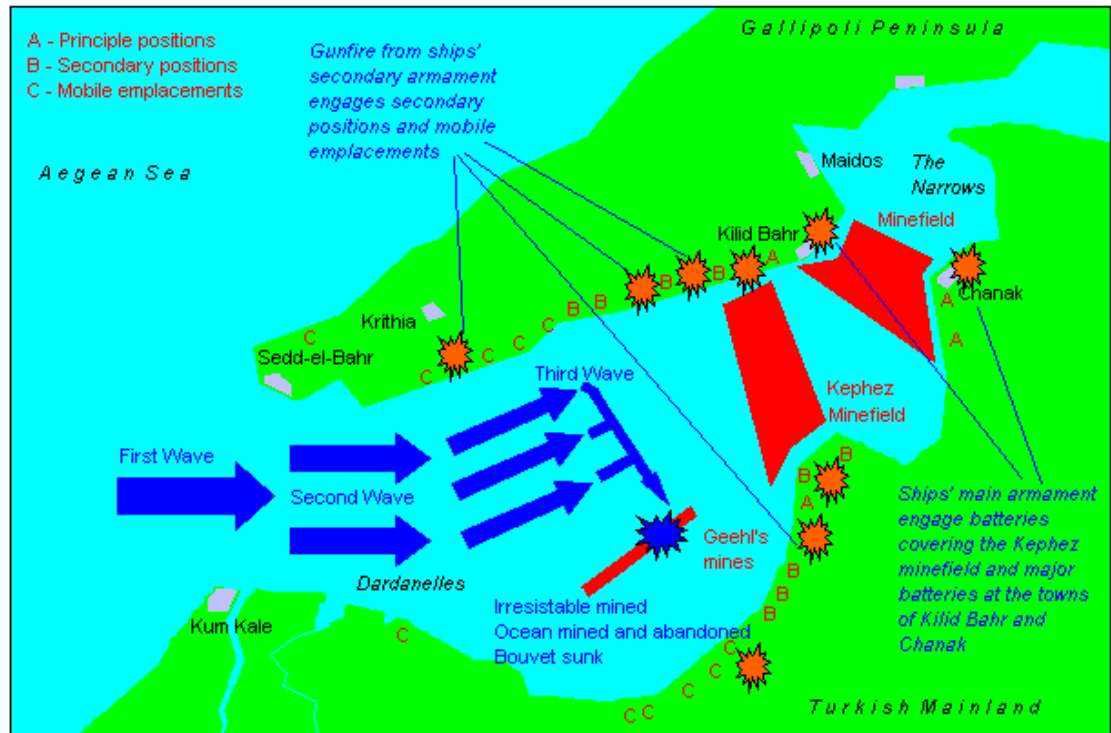


Figure 5. The Allied Naval Attack, March 18, 1915. Map courtesy of Dr John Rickard via <http://www.historyofwar.org> accessed January 6, 2015.

Meanwhile the naval attack remained in play. De Robeck was in full accord with Carden's plans for a large-scale sweeping and bombarding effort at the Narrows and, despite Hamilton's arrival on scene on March 17th, launched his assault at 10.45 in the morning of March 18th. The combined British and French squadron attacked in three consecutive lines of a total of fifteen battleships. The intent was that these three enormously powerful waves would destroy or suppress the Turkish defences sufficiently to allow the minesweeping force to clear the lines of contact mines in the Narrows by the close of March 18th. This, in turn, would permit the battleships to progress and destroy the remaining Narrows defences on March 19th and thus finally force the Straits. All proceeded according to plan until, just before 2.00pm one of the French ships, *Bouvet*, heeled over and sank in under three minutes having apparently struck a mine. Just sixty-six of her 709 crew survived. An hour later HMS *Inflexible* also stuck a mine and limped off to beach herself on the island of Tenedos. Just five minutes after that HMS *Irresistible*

suffered the same fate but had to be evacuated and abandoned in situ. Finally, just as de Robeck signaled his fleet to withdraw, HMS *Ocean* too stuck a mine and sank in deep water.¹¹³ With over a quarter of the capitol ships destroyed or severely damaged de Robeck withdrew to lick his wounds and reconsider his options.

Both Churchill and the War Council, who were briefed on the events of March 18th during their meeting on March 19th, were of the view that the Navy should continue with its plan and accept losses as necessary. In the War Council's case, however, such direction as emerged was equivocal, informing de Robeck "that he could continue the operations against the Dardanelles if he saw fit."¹¹⁴ Churchill wished to take a much more robust approach and only another threat of resignation from Fisher prevented him directing de Robeck to resume the attack immediately. Instead, on March 24th, he asked de Robeck, rather than instructed him, whether a naval only attack was still possible pointing out "that this telegram is not an executive order."¹¹⁵ Even Asquith "agree[d] with Winston and K [Kitchener] that the navy ought to make another big push."¹¹⁶

The Die is Cast

The arrival at the Dardanelles of Hamilton, however, combined with the naval defeat on March 18th changed local perceptions considerably. Hamilton had conferred with Birdwood

¹¹³ At the time the naval perception was that the Turks had developed a means of floating untethered mines down the Straits. However, it was subsequently discovered that a new line of twenty mines had been laid on the night of March 17th/18th, after the final seaplane reconnaissance flight, by the Turkish minelayer *Nusret*, in exactly the area where the allied battleships were to turn having finished firing.

¹¹⁴ CAB 42, 42/2/14, 2.

¹¹⁵ Winston Churchill telegram to Vice Admiral de Robeck, March 24, 1915, quoted in: Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 730.

¹¹⁶ H.H. Asquith to Venetia Stanley, March 23, 1915, quoted in: *ibid.* 726.

whom, as has already been seen, was never convinced of the likelihood of success of the naval plan. He had also completed a swift reconnaissance of the peninsula, and had observed the closing stages of the attack on March 18th. All of these left an impression and, even as Churchill was absorbing the RN losses on March 19th, Hamilton was writing to Kitchener:

“I am being most reluctantly driven to the conclusion that the Straits are not likely to be forced by battleships...and...if my troops are to take part, it will not take the subsidiary form anticipated. The Army’s part will be more than mere landings of parties to destroy Forts [sic], it must be a deliberate and progressive military operation carried out at full strength so as to open a passage for the Navy.”¹¹⁷

Hamilton and Birdwood met de Robeck on March 22nd at Lemnos and their views on how to proceed coincided although it will be recalled that Churchill’s notes to both Carden and de Robeck before March 18th emphasized the need to act in line with Hamilton’s thinking. Despite Churchill’s urgings for renewed naval action and despite Kitchener still referring to silencing guns and demolishing forts in a telegram to Hamilton on March 23rd, the men on the spot were of one mind, only a significant combined operation utilizing the whole of the military force available to Hamilton would suffice to force the Dardanelles. Rather than occupy the Gallipoli Peninsula and mop up *after* the navy had got through, the army would now aim to seize it to *allow* the navy to get through. De Robeck’s reply to Churchill’s March 24th telegram explained his view that “I now consider a combined operation essential to obtain great results and [the] object of [the] campaign.”¹¹⁸ Churchill, somewhat tamely, accepted this and, astonishingly without even a whimper, let alone a bang, the decision to commit almost one hundred thousand allied troops to a major opposed amphibious assault had been taken. It had been taken not by a Cabinet or War Council decision, not as a result of campaign planning by the British General

¹¹⁷ Sir Ian Hamilton telegram to Lord Kitchener, March 19, 1915, quoted in: Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 710.

¹¹⁸ Vice Admiral de Robeck telegram to Winston Churchill, March 26, 1915, quoted in: *ibid.*, 747.

Staff or Admiralty, but by a general who had been in theatre for less than a week and whose knowledge of the terrain was confined to what he could see from the deck of a swift sailing destroyer, and by an admiral who had been in command for less than a week whose only experience of battle command was a resounding defeat. The War Council was not to meet again in full session until May 14, 1915; three weeks after Hamilton's troops had stormed ashore on April 25th.

The rest of the Dardanelles Campaign can be dealt with in short order. Having struggled ashore with great gallantry and in the face of stubborn Turkish opposition on April 25th, the British, French and ANZAC expeditionary force quickly discovered that, after all, the Turkish Army was no pushover. By early May the Allied lodgment was effectively contained and, despite repeated efforts to break out the campaign, on both the Cape Helles and ANZAC fronts, became static trench warfare, mimicking the very barbed wire chewing of Flanders that the War Council had hoped the Dardanelles would be an alternative to. An attempt to outflank the Turks at ANZAC, supported by the landing of IX Corps of Kitchener's New Armies at Suvla Bay, in early August failed to break the deadlock and as Fall 1915 drew to a close it was decided, after considerable debate and political wrangling, to evacuate first ANZAC and subsequently Helles. All allied troops were off the Gallipoli Peninsula by January 9, 1916.



Figure 6. Kitchener and Birdwood contemplating evacuation, ANZAC November 1915. Photograph by Mr Ernest Brooks, courtesy of the Imperial War Museum, November 13, 1915.

By then the political landscape had also changed. Fisher was first to go, finally resigning in May in protest over further diversions (as he saw it) of ships from the Grand Fleet to the Dardanelles. Winston Churchill was next, reluctantly eased out of the Admiralty by Asquith under pressure from the Opposition. The Liberal Government also changed, being forced, largely by allegations of mishandling the War, to incorporate Opposition ministers in a quasi-coalition that struggled on into 1916 before Asquith himself was forced from office and replaced by Lloyd George. Even Kitchener, whose word, as described already, was law on matters military in early 1915, found his influence waning and when he was dispatched to Gallipoli in November 1915, ostensibly to decide on whether or not to evacuate, his Cabinet colleagues breathed a sigh of relief.

Strategic Validity and British Assumptions

Grand Strategy Good or Bad?

Thus far the monograph has followed the genesis of the Dardanelles Campaign from its theoretical beginnings as one among a number of grand strategic options in late 1914 and early 1915, through its eventual selection as a low cost but high impact operation, using Britain's overwhelming naval strength and traditional maritime approach, to its, almost accidental, apotheosis as a fully-fledged joint amphibious assault. The various political and military players and their interrelationships, agendas and actions have been noted as have what, in the minds of the members of the War Council, the operation was intended to achieve. It is now appropriate to return to the thesis and examine, firstly, whether the Grand Strategic goals were valid and achievable, and secondly, whether these Grand Strategic goals were translated into militarily viable options. The conclusion will be that, on balance, the Grand Strategic objectives of the campaign were viable and the actions of the British Government in weighing up its Grand Strategic options were entirely in keeping with the War Council's purpose. However, it shall also be concluded that by itself developing and attempting to resource military options to fulfil its

Grand Strategic goals, the War Council overreached its practical ability, both on a collective and individual level. This flawed translation between the policy and practice, between Grand Strategy and Military Strategy, this failure at the fault line of the civil/military interface led directly to a military campaign which was ill conceived, inadequately designed and resourced in an ad hoc and piecemeal fashion.

This section begins by reminding its reader of the government's intentions in late 1914 and early 1915. The overarching imperative can be simply stated; to identify a means of employing British power somewhere other than in the deadlocked siege like warfare of the Western Front. However, beneath this overarching desire was a range of other motivations, some shared by all, some reflecting particular interests or constituencies. Churchill and the Admiralty were keen to restore RN prestige (whilst retaining Grand Fleet dominance in the North Sea) by some coup in the littoral environment. Kitchener, always influenced by the need for allied unity, wished to be seen to continue support to the French and, in view of their apparent fragility but enormous military potential, the Russians. However, he wished to do so in a way that used economy of force and preserved the offensive power of the New Armies. Lloyd George felt that Germany might best be undermined, certainly until Britain's full military potential in the shape of the New Armies came on line, by attacking her allies. Grey and the Foreign Office wanted opportunities to entice wavering neutrals, particularly in the Balkans and Mediterranean, into joining the Allied cause. Asquith himself, whom one of his biographers reminds the reader "never thought it his duty to impose strategic decisions", was carried along in this universal desire to do something different and, as has already been set out, was all for "a diversion on a great & [sic] effective scale."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Roy Jenkins, *Asquith* (New York: Chilmark Press, 1964), 350. H.H. Asquith to Venetia Stanley, December 31, 1914 quoted in: Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 346.

So far so good. Considering a major change to the war effort in these terms was an entirely appropriate issue for the government to be debating at the highest level. This was, in this author's view, the very essence of National Policy or Grand Strategy in which "governments set objectives they expect generals [and admirals] to achieve."¹²⁰ In the course of early January 1915 the War Council went further. In its meetings of January 7th, 8th and 13th it attempted "a more comprehensive piece of forward planning than anything hitherto known" seeking to narrow down the range of alternatives set out in the three formal proposals that have been examined (Churchill's, Hankey's and Lloyd George's) and further impelled by the Russian plea for action conveyed to the Foreign Office.¹²¹ In these meetings the War Council's attention was gradually focused upon the Mediterranean. It initially contemplated action in the Balkans led by Lloyd George's thinking and by Grey's diplomatic intent but eventually its gaze fell on Turkey following Churchill's January 13th revelation that the Admiralty had a readymade winner up its collective sleeve in the form of the Carden plan.

The early stages of this debate, it is suggested, remained, once again, entirely within the legitimate purview of Grand Strategy as it was then understood. If Everett Carl Dolman's statement that "Grand Strategy is the process by which *all* the means available to the state are considered in pursuit of a continuing political advantage...diplomatic, information, military, and economic power" is correct then it would have been remiss of the War Council to conclude its Grand Strategic debate by simply stating that British power needed to be employed elsewhere.¹²² More detail and more direction to the military component of national power was needed and these debates were the mechanism to refine the necessary direction. However, and this point is one of

¹²⁰ Freedman, *Strategy*, xii.

¹²¹ Jenkins, *Asquith*, 350.

¹²² Everett Carl Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age* (New York, Frank Cass, 2005), 26.

the cruxes of the thesis, in adopting a specific military operation as national policy, the War Council took itself beyond Grand Strategy and landed, not simply in the military's domain of defining Military Strategy, but slap bang in the middle of operational art, if not the tactical domain. This action, perhaps more than any other, set the Dardanelles Campaign on the wrong course.

However, if it is accepted that looking for alternatives to the Western Front, including perhaps a return to Britain's traditional 'Blue Water'¹²³ school of strategy, was an appropriate, indeed essential, task of the War Council where should it have set the line between formulating policy and directing operations? Here the paper runs up against the awkward fact that reality almost always intervenes between the sterile world of strategic theory and the practical world of human interaction. Thus, whilst there is theoretical merit in the notion that, having directed the military to seek avenues for the employment of British military force somewhere other than the Western Front, the War Council's Grand Strategic job was done and that all else; the selection of the theatre, the forces to be employed and the military objectives to be achieved was Military Strategy and thus the business of the generals and admirals, set against the wider context of the war this notion is untenable. Gooch and Cohen make this very point when they tell generals "why they fight, when they fight, and very often where they fight...lie in the province of politics."¹²⁴ Cohen, indeed, takes this theory a step further in his appreciation of Clausewitz's famous dictum

¹²³ In essence, the 'Blue Water' school of thought, often prevalent in UK defence planning since the 18th Century, sought to maximize Britain's maritime pre-eminence by retaining control of the sea both to defend the home islands and to maximize commerce to Britain's advantage. This school sought not to engage in permanent continental alliances or British led land warfare but rather to use the financial power gained from unrestricted maritime trade to underwrite foreign nation land operations perhaps with a limited British Army contribution. Historically this kept the RN large and influential often at the expense of the Army (in the eyes of soldiers).

¹²⁴ Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 23.

that war is a continuation of politics by other means. His assertion that as war is conducted for political ends therefore “the statesman may legitimately interject himself into any aspect of war making” is no doubt true, but so is his rider, “although it is often imprudent for him to do so.”¹²⁵

It should not be forgotten, for example, that one of the factors causing the government to consider its strategic options was the parlous state, in January 1915, of one of its principal allies, the Russians. The Russian plea on New Year’s Day 1915 for a diversion to draw off some of the Turkish forces in the Caucasus will be recalled. While the performance of the Russian armies since August 1914 had been, in general, poor, the massive population and almost unlimited war potential of Russia made it essential for Britain and France to keep her in the fight. A Canadian historian notes that “the Russian failure to carry the war on to the end obscures the fact that, in 1914, Russia was viewed throughout Europe as a ‘coming’ power, and the next likely dominant military nation on the Continent,” very much a nation, therefore, to have on your side and to keep in the war.¹²⁶ Alan Moorehead, one of the classic historians of the Dardanelles Campaign, summarizes the Russian position in early 1915 well when he states:

“This was a situation that could not be ignored. After the tremendous blows of Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes the Russian armies were beginning to falter everywhere along the line. They were reported to have suffered over a million casualties, and their supplies of rifles and ammunition were giving out. A new German offensive in the spring might prove disastrous.”¹²⁷

Something had to be done to keep Russia going and, given that she had asked specifically for action against the Turks, it is not to be wondered at that this factor required the War Council to narrow its strategic focus to the Mediterranean. After all, reinforcing the BEF in France,

¹²⁵ Cohen, *Supreme Command*, 8.

¹²⁶ Keith Neilson, “Kitchener: A Reputation Refurbished?” *Canadian Journal of History*, vol. 15, issue 2 (August 1980), 208.

¹²⁷ Alan Moorehead, *Gallipoli* (Darlinghurst, Australia: Mead and Beckett, 1956), 31. The Battle of Tannenberg was fought between August 26, and August 30, 1914, the battle resulted in the almost complete destruction of the Russian Second Army. In September the first battle of the Masurian Lakes destroyed most of the First Army as well.

coaxing the Dutch into the allied camp or seizing an island off the German coast, worthy though such concepts may have been, was unlikely to persuade the Ottoman Empire to reduce its forces in the Caucasus. Moreover, the military aspect of national power was not the only one to be considered.

Economic factors too required the War Council to provide more focus. The defence of Egypt, or more specifically the defence of the Suez Canal, was a major element of British policy. Through the Suez came the commerce, natural resources and military manpower of the bulk of the Empire. Through it too came the oil required to power the RN. Without it, and by extension without Egypt, Britain would find herself at a significant, possibly fatal disadvantage. It is therefore not surprising that the War Council debated the defence of Egypt at length, as described earlier, on November 24, 1914. Nor should it be remarkable that the Suez Canal's security came again to the fore just at the point in early 1915 when the War Council was scanning the horizons for strategic options. On this occasion the Turks, under Djemal Pasha, "a member of the triumvirate who had effectively run the Ottoman Empire since 1913," and thus no minor regional Ottoman functionary to be ignored or underrated, crossed the Sinai with an army of twelve thousand commencing on January 15, 1915.¹²⁸ His subsequent ignominious defeat on February 3rd ironically helped fuel British preconceptions about the weakness of the Turkish Army but, at the critical decision making period of mid-late January, his very presence helped draw the eyes of the War Council towards the east and towards Turkey.

On the diplomatic front, Grey and his Foreign Office had spent much of the winter of 1914/15 pondering means of adding new members to the Anglo-French-Russian entente. Given that most of the states of northern and central Europe were already in the war on one side or other and the rest remained avowedly neutral their focus had been on the, as yet, uncommitted states of

¹²⁸ Efraim and Inari Karsh, *Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 141.

the Mediterranean and the Balkans. Greece had been approached in autumn 1914 without success; Italy too featured high on Grey's list, as he reminded the War Council in early January 1915, seeking Admiralty help "with the object of drawing Italy into the war."¹²⁹ By late January increasing Austrian pressure on Serbia was bringing Balkan alliance building to the top of the agenda, the PM reporting that he had "urged Grey to put the strongest possible pressure on Roumania & [sic] Greece to come in without delay ...[to] form a real Balkan bloc."¹³⁰

Thus, the exigencies of coalition warfare, essential national interests, and pressing diplomatic considerations pointed British Grand Strategy firmly at the Mediterranean and increasingly at the Balkans, the Adriatic, and the Aegean. This, it is asserted, remained entirely consistent with what Grand Strategy should be.

British Assumptions, Mirage or Reality?

Having concluded that the War Council's Grand Strategy was indeed valid and, moreover, that it was entirely appropriate to direct its gaze specifically at the Dardanelles as the location most likely to achieve its aims it is necessary to consider what assumptions underlay these decisions. This section will examine the linked assumptions that the Turks would offer no meaningful resistance and that, once the fleet appeared off Constantinople Ottoman disintegration and probable capitulation would follow. It will also consider the assumption that, with the Dardanelles and Bosphorus open to the allies, Russia could be given the military assistance she required. It will ponder whether Turkish defeat would necessarily bring the undecided Balkan states into the war on the allied side. Finally, and, crucially, it will dissect the assumption that the defences of the Dardanelles could be reduced by naval action alone.

¹²⁹ CAB 42 42/1/16, 4.

¹³⁰ H.H. Asquith to Venetia Stanley, January 21, 1915, quoted in: Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 437.

Turkish Fragility

It appears to have been an article of faith among all those involved in the decision to mount the Dardanelles campaign that, in the Turks, Britain was not facing a first rate opponent. Churchill, for example, claimed after the event, “it was always in my mind that we were not dealing with a thoroughly efficient military power.” Grey felt that the “Turks would be paralyzed with fear” once the naval bombardment started. Kitchener repeatedly aired his views on the probability of Turkish evacuation from the Gallipoli Peninsula and likely withdrawal from the war should Constantinople be threatened.¹³¹ Such unflattering estimates of Turkish military capability and national will played a significant role in permitting the British to drift into action and to fail throughout the campaign to resource adequately the means required to win it. With hindsight such underestimation of the enemy seems unforgiveable and has been harshly judged in some historical accounts. However, judged against the context of the times it becomes more understandable. The now little remembered HMS *Doris* incident of late 1914 offered the War Council “proof that the Turks were not serious opponents, and encouraged the hope that no great military effort would be needed to force Turkey out of the war.”¹³² The *Doris*, a British cruiser operating off Alexandretta, had landed a party to destroy sections of railway line and infrastructure on the Berlin to Baghdad line on December 20, 1914. The local Ottoman authorities, cowed by the appearance of a British warship, actually assisted in the demolition and two Turks deserted and left aboard the ship as she sailed off. This “opera bouffe episode” became well known in British government and military circles and cannot but have given a strong impression of Turkish weakness.¹³³ Nor was this an isolated incident as the already described

¹³¹ United Kingdom, *Dardanelles Commission of Inquiry Papers* (London: HMSO, 1917 (1st Report and Supplement)), 20 (hereafter The Dardanelles Commission). CAB 42, 42/1/26, 4.

¹³² Gilbert, “Churchill and Gallipoli,” in Macleod (Ed), *Gallipoli*, 19.

¹³³ Rhodes-James, *Gallipoli*, 16. More recent scholarship, such as that of Edward J.

repulse of Djemal Pasha on the Suez Canal demonstrates. It should also be remembered that the Ottoman state was still recovering from the revolution of the Young Turks and had been roundly defeated by its former subjects in the Balkan Wars of 1912/13. T. E. Lawrence, although writing of events after the campaign, nonetheless makes a telling and relevant point when he states that “Turkey was dying of overstrain, of the attempt, with diminished resources, to hold...the whole Empire bequeathed to it.”¹³⁴ Moreover, Constantinople itself was largely indefensible and was widely known, at the time, for “being an [sic] hysterical place” where the mob was easily roused and the government prone to hasty evacuation.¹³⁵ Moorhead, no great advocate of the campaign in other ways, states that “the fall of Constantinople was in effect the fall of the state” and that the appearance of a British fleet off Constantinople would surely cause that fall.¹³⁶ Indeed, once the naval bombardment began in February 1915 “the Turkish government was frightened enough to begin moving its records and necessary administrative paraphernalia to the interior.”¹³⁷ Henry Morgenthau, the American Ambassador to the Sublime Porte, vividly remarked upon “the fear and panic” which gripped Constantinople at this time.¹³⁸ Thus the British assumption that the Turks might simply cave in was not without foundation. Set against this perception, however, was the fact that Turkish doggedness in defence, the improvements made to their Army and the Dardanelles defences under German tutelage and the performance of the seconded German

Erickson, “Captain Larkin and the Turks: The Strategic Impact of the Operations of HMS *Doris* in early 1915.” *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 46, no. 1 (January 2010) reminds the reader that, in fact, the deserters were not Turks but Armenians, who had no great love for their Ottoman overlords and that the local Ottoman authorities had no immediate military support available, but nonetheless, the impression on the War Council at the time is clear.

¹³⁴ T.E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph* (London: Penguin Books, 1962), 54.

¹³⁵ Moorehead, *Gallipoli*. 35.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ John Robertson, *ANZAC and Empire* (London: Leo Cooper, 1990), 53.

¹³⁸ Henry Morgenthau, *Secrets of the Bosphorus* (New York: Hutchinson, 1918), 143.

officers who commanded many key Turkish units proved of paramount importance throughout the campaign.

Russian Resupply

What then of the second British assumption, that by opening the Dardanelles (and by taking Constantinople, the Bosphorus as well) a supply line to Russia both to import war materiel and for the Russians to export their wheat (thus acquiring the monetary wherewithal to pay for the imported materiel) could be maintained? Here again is seen clear evidence of wishful thinking. Early 1915 saw the War Council spending a great deal of its time debating how to acquire essential war material for British forces. Kitchener, for example, told the War Council in March 1915, “the outlook as regards shells was worse than in regard to rifles,” rifles already being in short supply with imported United States rifles being arranged for and that “small arms ammunition was also rather unsatisfactory.”¹³⁹ When it is recalled that the ‘shell crisis’ was one of the factors in the fall of the Asquith government and also that shortages of artillery ammunition were one of the constant complaints from Hamilton throughout the Gallipoli fighting it is difficult to see how Britain could have supplied much in the way of the essential war material required by the Russians.

One way, of course, would have been for Britain and France to buy third party war material and dispatch it to their ailing ally. Again the difficulty of supply was uncovered. On February 9th the War Council was informed that attempts to procure Italian rifles for the Russians had foundered on the fact that “the Italian government is unwilling to let them leave the country.”¹⁴⁰ Similar attempts to procure American and, later, Japanese rifles for the Russians bore no more fruit. Nor is it clear where the shipping to move any materiel that could be procured

¹³⁹ CAB 42, 42/2/3, 7.

¹⁴⁰ CAB 42, 42/1/33, 2.

would have come from. Although the majority of the wheat ships locked up in the Black Sea were British merchantmen, such were the other drains on allied shipping, to say nothing of the increasing predations of the German U Boat fleet, that it is unlikely that sufficient tonnage would have been available to resupply Russia to the degree necessary. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that significant resupply of Russia would have been impossible.

Balkan Allies

Asquith's vision of a 'Balkan Bloc' and Grey's 'hesitating neutrals' being lured into the allied fold by success at the Dardanelles also requires review. Certainly, in retrospect at least, Churchill felt positive that in the event of success "the whole of the forces of the Balkan confederation could then have been directed against the underside of Austria" leading to "the speedy victorious termination of the war."¹⁴¹ There is certainly evidence that the Balkan states wished to find themselves on the side of the victors but it must be doubtful, to say the least, that the "Balkan national and racial hatreds were to be conveniently submerged in the interests of the Entente powers."¹⁴² Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia had just finished fighting each other in the second Balkan War and Bulgaria, in particular, coveted some Serbian and Greek provinces. The Bulgarian Tsar, Ferdinand, was Austrian by birth and inclination whilst the Greek King, Constantine, was brother-in-law to the German Kaiser and at odds with his pro-entente Prime Minister Venizelos. Moreover, all the Balkan states were, to a lesser or greater degree, suspicious of Russian intentions in the area. To assume that the states of the Balkans would adopt a common cause strikes this author as blindly optimistic. Even had they come into the allied camp the woebegone state of their respective armies in 1915 would not have augured well. As Robin Prior

¹⁴¹ Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis* (London: Odhams Press 1939), 849.

¹⁴² Robertson, *ANZAC and Empire*, 51.

points out, given the lack of preparedness, equipment, a common language and objectives and the difficult terrain over which they would have to operate, if they were ever “placed in the field their prospects were dismal.”¹⁴³

Hearts of Oak

Perhaps the greatest assumption made in the genesis of the campaign, as it transpired the most flawed, and costly, was the view that the Straits could be forced by the RN alone without a significant land element operating in tandem to secure the Gallipoli Peninsula. The review of the sequence of events leading up to the campaign has already revealed the increasing doubts in, first Fishers’, and later the majority of the War Councils’, minds on this issue so it is necessary to address the assumption as it first emerged in January 1915. In the first instance one must enquire why Churchill, who had ruled out any prospect of forcing the Dardanelles in 1911, was prepared to contemplate it in 1915. The long held answer according to both the findings of the Dardanelles Commission and in many histories was simple; Churchill himself had learned false lessons from the success of German shelling of the Belgian forts and Japanese shelling of Port Arthur in the Russo/Japanese War in 1904. He was then able to browbeat his naval experts into agreement. Churchill, in *The World Crisis*, directly refuted any such suggestion, quoting from C.E.W. Bean, the official Australian war historian, as he does so:

“ ‘So through Churchill’s excess of imagination, a layman’s ignorance of artillery, and the fatal power of a young enthusiasm to convince older and slower brains, the tragedy of Gallipoli was born’ [Bean]. It is my hope that the Australian people...will not rest content with so crude, so inaccurate, so incomplete and so prejudiced a judgment [Churchill].”¹⁴⁴

Churchill went on to make a case that it was actually a rational and broadly agreed Admiralty position, not his own, that changed his mind, and this aspect will be returned to later in

¹⁴³ Prior, *Gallipoli*, 251.

¹⁴⁴ Churchill, *The World Crisis*, 331.

the monograph. What had changed, in essence, between 1911 and 1915 was the technology involved and in particular the hitting power of the 15 inch guns of the newer warships such as the *Queen Elizabeth* together with the potential offered by seaplane based gunnery observers. Ironically, given the outcome, in the case of ships against forts the RN's heavy guns could, and did, destroy the aging Turkish fixed forts but, crucially, full destruction of the guns within was only possible with landing parties. The bigger issue, though, largely overlooked at the time and in much of the scholarship since, was that the forts were only part of the problem. Instead it was the Turkish minefields and mobile howitzers that prevented the allied fleet from coming to grips with, and in all probability destroying, the key forts at the Narrows. The minefields could only be removed by aggressive, armored, sweepers, of which the Aegean fleet initially had none and the howitzers had to be destroyed by landing parties. One is left to conclude that the assumption was flawed but not, in this author's view, fatally so. Systematically forcing the Straits remained possible with the right naval force mix, to wit more armored minesweepers. However the assumption that the navy could force the Dardanelles was useless in itself unless the Turks collapsed immediately the navy broke through and, at the very least, evacuated the Gallipoli Peninsula.

Summary of Assumptions

Whilst the assumptions have been interrogated separately, in the minds of the War Council in January 1915 there were inextricably woven together. Thus, it was felt probable that the RN would get through unaided, a not entirely implausible thought as has been concluded. If they did get through unaided then surely the Turks would abandon the Gallipoli Peninsula and perhaps even sue for peace the argument ran. Once again, analysis does not rule this out. If the Peninsula was abandoned then where was the need for a large land force other than to follow up at relative leisure and occupy Constantinople? If the Balkan States were less likely than was thought to immediately make common cause with each other and the Entente powers and if

resupply to Russia might prove significantly less straight forward than hoped, well, these were secondary issues to be wrestled with once the RN was ensconced off the Golden Horn and the Ottoman government either in flight for Asia Minor or suing for peace. The problem, obvious with hindsight, is that allied success rested on two assumptions, neither certain, both of which had to prove correct for the naval only plan to work. If the Navy did not get through the Turks would not crumble and someone would have to secure the RN's flanks and quieten the mobile batteries. If the Navy did get through but the Turks did not crumble then, once again, the flanks would need to be secured and the Turkish defences destroyed to allow the Navy to be resupplied and the unarmored merchant shipping to exit the Straits. Thus, to this author, it is not so much that the War Council made incorrect assumptions, it is more that by 'doubling down' on two inextricably linked but essentially uncertain assumptions the Council accepted more risk than it appreciated and its decisions began to look more like a gamble than a calculated risk. However, as noted above when discussing strategy, it is entirely within the remit of national policy makers to explore options for action that entail risk. One of the principal means to mitigate such risk is the professional advice of their senior military advisors, itself informed by as detailed a military appreciation of the options as time permits.

A Military Appreciation?

A recent critic of the campaign captures the predominating scholarly opinion on the military appreciation issue thus:

“The Gallipoli campaign would never have been launched if a proper staff appreciation of operations had been carried out: of the enormity of the task in hand, the strength of the opposition, the nature of the terrain, the scale of the forces and the logistical back-up required to make it succeed. But thanks to political interference, lethally combined with the bullish optimism of generals who saw only opportunities, the Gallipoli campaign was launched into a void that guaranteed failure.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Peter Hart, *Gallipoli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 462.

It is difficult to disagree with this assessment overall, however in this author's view, it fails to appreciate the extent to which the policy makers felt entitled - with considerable reason as has been described elsewhere – not so much to 'interfere' as to be prescriptive in terms of grand strategy. Moreover it telescopes time and conflates the situation prevailing in early January 1915, when, as already argued, both naval-only success and Turkish collapse were not as farfetched to contemporary eyes as hindsight now makes them, with that of late March, after de Robeck's failure to break through when an amphibious landing became inevitable. That said there is considerable truth in the statement. It is telling that even Churchill, normally cast as the imprudent, impatient, visionary instigator of the campaign, having been directed on January 13th by Asquith that "the Admiralty should ... prepare for a naval operation ... to bombard and take the Gallipoli peninsula, with Constantinople as its objective", suggested that "careful Staff examinations" might be wise before committing to this course of action.¹⁴⁶ This choice of words is often used to excoriate Churchill on the assumption that having suggested staff examinations none was sought. In fact they were, but purely naval ones as, at this point, there was no indication that any troops would be available. Not only did the Admiralty have the detailed plans of their man on the spot, Carden, but Churchill also referred the matter to two of his most senior planners, Admirals Jackson and Oliver, who were tasked to develop the Carden plan further. The Admirals produced a series of four papers that were, to all intents and purposes, a naval appreciation of the proposed operation. Regrettably this work was less than comprehensive and focused excessively on the issue of ships against forts at the expense of issues such as minesweeping, spotting, and accurate ammunition expenditure estimates. Prior sums it up as "a lamentable failure to get to

¹⁴⁶ CAB 42, 42/1/16, 10.

grips with most of the important issues confronting Carden.”¹⁴⁷ The undoubted doyen of Royal Naval history, Arthur Marder, takes this criticism a step further and broadens the blame:

“Since Churchill, the War Staff [Jackson and Oliver], and Carden ignored or minimized the technical difficulties involved in a naval operation, it is not surprising that the War Council wore blinkers and gave absolutely no indication of any awareness of these obstacles.”¹⁴⁸

It would appear then, that the issue with the naval only plan was not so much the absence of an appreciation¹⁴⁹ but rather the presence of a poor one.

Land forces focused planning or joint amphibious planning was, on the other hand, entirely lacking at any point. No appreciation of the possibility of having to land troops on either the Gallipoli Peninsula or on the Asiatic shore opposite was made by the British subsequent to the 1906 study referred to in the opening paragraph of this paper. This was not because the War Council or military commanders did not appreciate the importance of a joint approach. They did and, even if they did not, the ubiquitous Hankey was on hand to circulate the 1906 Paper to the War Council members to remind them. In addition, they had the benefit of an appreciation prepared by the Greek Army in late 1914 that uncovered many of the same issues. The lack of attention to any part the army might play was, in January 1915, understandable if not excusable. Kitchener had said that there were no available troops and Kitchener’s word on all matters military at this time, was law. However, as the execution of the Carden plan meandered into February and approached its decisive moment in early March, troops were available and earmarked in the shape of the ANZACs, the Royal Naval Division and, later, 29 Div and a French formation. The absence of any coherent planning by March for what to do with these forces is

¹⁴⁷ Prior, *Gallipoli*, 38.

¹⁴⁸ Arthur J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919. Vol. II, The War Years: To the Eve of Jutland, 1914-1916* (London, Oxford University Press, 1965), 217.

¹⁴⁹ An ‘Appreciation’ is a British term for what is more usually referred to in the US military as a ‘commander’s assessment’ or a ‘staff assessment’.

less easy to comprehend than it was in January. It perhaps speaks to the utter confidence that Kitchener retained at this stage of the war. No-one (apart from, of course, Hankey who wrote in detail to Asquith on March 16th recommending that the War Council be given details of army planning) saw a need to second guess the great man. That Kitchener had all in hand was simply assumed. He did not, and nor did anyone else in the General Staff “consider exactly what the military force was to do.”¹⁵⁰ The pre-deployment preparations afforded General Sir Ian Hamilton are a microcosm of this issue. According to a recent biographer, Hamilton was later to comment wistfully, “had he been a German general the Great General Staff would have handed him meticulously detailed plans, prepared long in advance and kept for such an eventuality.”¹⁵¹ Instead, Hamilton arrived in Lemnos to command the MEF with; a pre-war guidebook, a 1912 handbook on the Turkish Army, a single sheet of very general, mostly negative, instructions from Kitchener and an understrength, scratch staff that had met for the first time at the station in London from which they departed for the operational theatre. To summarize, the absence of a land forces appreciation, to an extent understandable and of little real consequence in January had become, by March, a critical deficiency. Moreover, had the difficulties of; terrain, balance of forces, strength and laydown of the opposition, and logistics in particular been formally reconsidered it is hard to see how the 1915 appreciation would have been any more positive than that of 1906.

Would this have swayed the War Council though? This author suspects not. By the time an appreciation on any amphibious operation would have been necessary the minds of many on the Council had moved on to the division of spoils likely to accrue from the Navy’s successful

¹⁵⁰ Nigel Steel and Peter Hart, *Defeat at Gallipoli* (London: Macmillan, 1994), 19-20.

¹⁵¹ John Lee, *A Soldier’s Life: General Sir Ian Hamilton 1853-1947* (London: Pan Books, 2000), 146.

forcing of the Straits and they were engaged in plans for “annexing large slabs of Asia Minor.”¹⁵² In any case, as far as they were concerned the probability was that the Turks would collapse quickly in the event of a landing (hardly likely itself given the power of the RN) and anyway, Kitchener, the greatest soldier in Britain (and therefore by Edwardian convention, the world) expressed no concern. Again, it should be borne in mind that the War Council did not feel it necessary to reconvene in advance of the landings on April 25, 1915 thus, unless Kitchener had felt it necessary to bring any such appreciation to their attention the War Council would not even have had the opportunity to read it. Inertia, cultural arrogance, excessive confidence in the Secretary of State for War and wishful thinking would, in this author’s view, have won the day.

Responsibility or Blame, The Roots of Failure

To summarize section three of the monograph, it has been seen how Britain’s highest policy makers were guided by a series of linked assumptions. Those assumptions, while not necessarily disastrously flawed when considered each in isolation to the others, when accumulated and combined represented a very high degree of risk. It has been further explained that these assumptions were so widely shared as to have assumed the aspect of objective truth in the eyes of the majority of the War Council rather than subjective, and often logically unsound, opinion. The paper has concluded that the government placed an extreme degree of trust in their senior military advisors. Consequently, the government failed to avail themselves of the opportunity to ensure that they were adequately planning the Dardanelles Campaign by asking for sight of an updated military appreciation, at either the onset of the naval operation or, more importantly, when combined operations were considered. Finally, the view has been taken that even had such an appreciation been available it would have been unlikely to shake the twin pillars of the War Council’s faith in its assumptions and faith in its advisors (particularly Kitchener). The

¹⁵² Prior, *Gallipoli*, 70.

next, and penultimate, section of the monograph will consider whether the War Council was let down by the military and naval staff, to what extent it was itself responsible for the failure of the campaign and whether the overall governmental structure for running the war was suited for such a task.

Admirals

In *The World Crisis* Churchill went to great lengths to emphasize the extent to which the entire Admiralty was uniformly in favor of the Carden plan. He noted that both the birth of the plan (in Carden's mind) and its development (by Jackson and Oliver) "were purely naval and professional" and concluded, "right or wrong, it was a Service plan."¹⁵³ However, appearing before the Dardanelles Commission in 1917, both Jackson and Oliver disputed this and criticized the Carden plan in some detail. Moreover, Fisher too harbored doubts about the naval-only plan and even Churchill later admitted that his reply to Carden on January 6, 1915 telling him "high authorities here concur with your opinion" should not be interpreted as meaning that Fisher specifically approved.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, at the Dardanelles Commission hearings Churchill explicitly acknowledged that Fisher "expressed no adverse opinion at the time, but his [preferred] view was a joint attack."¹⁵⁵ So, if the most senior serving RN officer and most of the Services other senior planning staff had significant doubts over the naval-only plan why were these doubts not articulated to the War Council? The usual answer to this question suggests that Churchill "imposed his will by wearing down any opposition with a mixture of eloquence, enthusiasm and bullying" thus by the power of his persuasive oratory and dominant personality browbeating his

¹⁵³ Churchill, *The World Crisis*, 121.

¹⁵⁴ Winston Churchill telegram to Vice Admiral Carden, January 6, 1915, quoted in: Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 381.

¹⁵⁵ Dardanelles Commission, 21.

Admirals into silence.¹⁵⁶ This perspective, however, does not tell the full story and masks the extent to which, at least initially, Fisher, Jackson, Oliver, and Wilson were prepared to acquiesce to the Carden plan, witness Fisher's decision to add the *Queen Elizabeth* to the force package for example. Whilst all four would later deny their support, Jackson for example telling the Dardanelles Commission that a naval-only attack was "a mad thing to do" and Fisher explaining that "it was doomed to failure,"¹⁵⁷ the essential point is that at no point in early 1915 did any of them feel strongly enough to object formally to the plan publicly.¹⁵⁸ Perhaps most egregious is Fisher's failure, at the War Council of January 28th to explain and articulate his objections, which by then were significant enough to cause him to rise from the Council table and try to leave the room. In his memoirs he justified his silence by stating; that "we can withdraw the ships at any moment, so long as the Military don't [sic] land,"¹⁵⁹ that he owed loyalty to his political chief and personal friend Churchill, and that he "wanted to [remain as First Sea Lord to] oversee the completion of the great shipbuilding programme [sic] he had initiated."¹⁶⁰ Later commentators have advanced other explanations on his behalf; that at seventy three he was past his prime and unable to cope with Churchill's youthful vigor, and that he was prepared to acquiesce silently to the Dardanelles Campaign as a means of retaining the political capital to expend later on his preferred Baltic schemes. All these factors may have elements of truth. Nothing, however, excuses the nations' senior uniformed maritime advisor from a failure to do his primary duty, to advise the government for better or worse on his view of the practicalities of the plan. The

¹⁵⁶ John Laffin, *Damn the Dardanelles: The Agony of Gallipoli* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1980), 24.

¹⁵⁷ Dardanelles Commission, 21-22.

¹⁵⁸ Although in their private papers, particularly Fisher's, their antipathy to the scheme is plain.

¹⁵⁹ Adm. Sir John Fisher, *Memories* (London: Macmillan, 1919), 59.

¹⁶⁰ Marder, *Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, 211.

Dardanelles Commission were harsh on Fisher and, in this author's view, rightly so. To suggest that he "was Churchill's victim, it is unfair to be hard on him" will not suffice to pardon him.¹⁶¹ He was an Admiral of the Fleet, a Five Star Flag Officer, a grown up, he had an obligation to state any objections he might have had, anything less was simply not good enough.

Generals

If the performance of the Admiralty was disappointing, that of the General Staff was all but nonexistent. Given the significant amount of work conducted since the Boer War to create and energize the General Staff this is puzzling. All the more so when it is remembered that the last time the British examined the Dardanelles area in detail the General Staff worked hand in glove with the Admiralty to produce the 1906 joint appreciation referred to elsewhere. However, it must be borne in mind that Britain did not yet possess a deep reservoir of staff trained Army officers. Thus, when the BEF formed and deployed in August 1914 not only did it require many of the trained staff officers of the General Staff to round out its various headquarters, but also many of the more adventurous of those officers remaining managed to get themselves attached to the BEF.¹⁶² Moreover, the decision to close the Staff College for the duration of hostilities meant that trained and suitable replacements were not immediately available. To this structural problem was added one of personality. Lieutenant General Sir James Wolfe Murray was appointed CIGS in October 1914 having been extracted from the backwater of command in South Africa. Churchill, always a good man for an apt nickname, referred to Wolfe Murray as 'Sheep' and his performance during the gestation of the Dardanelles campaign bears this nickname out fully. A

¹⁶¹ Laffin, *Damn the Dardanelles*, 199.

¹⁶² This is a factor in any new operation involving a professional Army. The author recalls the initial deployment of UK forces for the invasion of Iraq in 2003 when several dozens of staff officers from UK Army HQ and MOD managed to 'acquire' attachments to units and formations involved in the operation, often on very flimsy grounds indeed.

leading historian of the General Staff states that Wolfe Murray “was wholly unfitted by temperament or experience to be CIGS.”¹⁶³ It is telling that Wolfe Murray, the professional head of the British Army, hardly rates a mention in many of the histories of the campaign. In the War Council’s eighteen meetings that he attended between his appointment and the landings on April 25, 1915 he is only recorded as having spoken twice, once on Kitchener’s direction on a technical matter, and once in reply to a direct question from Grey when he “replied that he had no suggestions to make.”¹⁶⁴ Nor does the DMO, Major General Sir Charles Callwell, appear to have offered a great deal more. Whilst he informed the Dardanelles Commission that he was seldom consulted and that, if he had been, he would have opposed the attack on the Dardanelles, it is difficult to find any contemporary evidence of this view. Hankey offers an alternate view of Callwell’s attitude and of the performance of the General Staff generally in early 1915 when he records the events of a meeting of the General Staff chaired by the Secretary of State for War:

“[Kitchener] sits at the head of the table and talks a lot, and bludgeons everyone into agreeing with him...the Chief of Staff [Wolfe Murray]...merely mumbling assent, and Callwell just agreeing.”¹⁶⁵

It may be concluded from this that not only was the General Staff of early 1915 stripped of much of its talent but also that, under Kitchener, its voice was, to all intents and purposes, neutered. It might also be inferred that, culturally, the British Army of the early part of World War 1 was not yet completely free of the bonds of deference which it was later to shed as its casualties and experience grew.

¹⁶³ John Gooch, *The Plans of War: The General Staff and British Military Strategy, 1900-1916* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), 303.

¹⁶⁴ CAB 42, 42/1/35, 6.

¹⁶⁵ Gooch, *The Plans of War*, 306.

Structures

Within months of the end of the campaign new PM Lloyd George's coalition government succumbed to political and public pressure and appointed a Royal Commission, the Dardanelles Commission, to rake over the traces. With virtually unfettered access to the main protagonists,¹⁶⁶ the Commission conducted 89 evidence-gathering sittings and was able to question, in detail and at length, everyone involved in the conception, planning, and conduct of the campaign from Asquith down. Whilst the detail of the evidence tendered by individuals questioned was never made public, the Commission's two reports, published in 1917 and 1919, nevertheless drew heavily upon excerpts and quotations from that evidence. The first report covered the War Council's decision-making process in early 1915 leading up to the landings on April 25th. The second explored the detail of the military operations subsequent to that date. It is therefore with the first report that this monograph is most concerned.

Whilst couched in the gentlemanly written English of the period and by no means as damning an official document as it perhaps should have been (or would, no doubt, be in today's blame obsessed public environment) given the magnitude of the military failure, the Report nevertheless makes some shrewd and pointed comments. Its conclusions on the higher management of the British Empire's defence policy make it clear that "the principal discussions occurred and the most important decisions were taken, not at the meetings of the Cabinet, but at those of the War Council."¹⁶⁷ This point is crucial to an understanding of the thesis and bears fuller examination. The higher organization of national defence in Edwardian Britain rested upon the Cabinet assisted by the CID. In theory the CID was merely the Cabinet's advisory and defence secretariat body and existed to discuss weighty military, naval, and foreign policy issues

¹⁶⁶ With the signal exception of Kitchener who had drowned when en route to Russia in the cruiser HMS Hampshire in June 1916.

¹⁶⁷ Dardanelles Commission, 1st Report, 3.

prior to presenting conclusions and options for ratification by the full Cabinet. However in practice the CID could, and did, make substantive decisions and direct its executive agents, the War Office and Admiralty, to carry them out. Given that the CID was chaired by the sitting PM and usually consisted of those members of the Cabinet most concerned with its subject matter (Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretaries of State for War, Foreign Affairs and India and the First Lord) this is no surprise and does not appear to have presented the rest of the Cabinet or Government with any particular dilemmas. However, and germane to the thesis, the professional heads of the Army and RN, the CIGS and First Sea Lord were also full and vocal members of the CID. Thus the description of the CID in the Dardanelles Commission's first report as "a committee of the Cabinet with some experts added" is entirely accurate.¹⁶⁸

At the outbreak of war, perhaps in an attempt to bind together his Liberal Cabinet, several of whose members had already resigned in protest at Britain's participation in the war, Asquith attempted to use the Cabinet to guide and direct British war policy. However, by November 1914, the twenty two man Cabinet had been found to be too unwieldy a policy engine for the pace and complexity of a general war and from November 25th onwards a War Council supplanted the Cabinet in this respect. The terminology, and particularly the understanding of that terminology, is important. In all but name, the War Council was the CID. It consisted, essentially, of the same office holders with only the addition of the Lord Chancellor (R.M. Haldane) and Balfour, the former leader of the Unionist (now Conservative) Party. It had the same secretariat, headed by the redoubtable and highly influential Hankey, and it performed the same function of discussing and deciding defence policy and then directing the diplomatic corps, army, and navy to carry it out.

However, what emerged at the Dardanelles Commission was that the 'experts', previously not shy of debate and presentation of their views when the CID sat before the war, did

¹⁶⁸ Dardanelles Commission, 1st Report, 4.

not view the War Council as a similarly collegiate and inclusive forum. Taking due account for the natural instinct of self and reputational preservation likely to have informed evidence to the commission, the comments of both the CIGS and First Sea Lord are telling. From the War Office, where admittedly Kitchener was a professional expert as well as a government minister, the CIGS “considered himself a staff officer of Lord Kitchener...not called upon to express any independent opinion.”¹⁶⁹ At the Admiralty, despite Churchill being no expert, even Fisher reported, “we were the experts there who were to open our mouths when told to.”¹⁷⁰ The political members of the War Council, to a man, held diametrically opposed views and felt that the experts not only had the right but also the duty to speak up. The PM, for example, explained, “I should have expected any of the experts there, if they entertained a strong personal view...to express it.”¹⁷¹ Lord Chancellor Haldane was equally unequivocal stating, “we all looked upon... [the experts]...as there to take counsel with us.”¹⁷² Thus we hit upon one of the key reasons why the inception of the Dardanelles Campaign lacked military and naval rigor, the relevant experts simply did not believe that they had a mandate to counter the opinions of their political masters. In not carrying forward the familiar and useful CID into the period of active warfare, Asquith, it seems, had partially emasculated his senior uniformed advisors. As has been seen, this, when allied with several other equally important flaws in strategic planning, was to have dramatic and unfortunate consequences for the MEF at the Dardanelles.

Even this flaw could have perhaps been mitigated if the War Council, despite the silence of its embedded military experts, had been able to espouse a wider range and variety of views and opinions. However, its members were of a political generation where British diplomatic and

¹⁶⁹ Dardanelles Commission, 1st Report, 6.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 9.

¹⁷² Ibid., 8.

military (particularly naval) ascendancy where an article of faith and, despite their difference in ages and party political leanings they shared a set of assumptions and world views too similar to spark the kind of contrarian debate which, in retrospect, was required. Robin Prior sums up this structural and psychological inadequacy well:

“As a vehicle for the higher direction of the war they [the War Council] could not provide the counterweight for the optimism of a Churchill, the arrogance of a Kitchener or the insouciance of an Asquith, because, in general they were of the same cast of mind. If the political leadership in Britain could be said to be on a learning curve about the conduct of a major war, in early 1915 they were still hovering around its point of origin.”¹⁷³

Politicians

It has been seen that neither the Admirals nor the Generals were able, or felt able, to offer substantive professional military advice. Moreover, they were, to a degree, constrained by the management structures selected for use during the war. It is now necessary to examine the roles of the political leaders in more detail. This survey will start, as a majority of the scholarship does, with Churchill.

Many early accounts of the campaign, prevalent in particular prior to the release of the classified governmental records of the war, gave Churchill the leading role as its progenitor and driving force and thus, ultimately, as the root cause of allied failure.¹⁷⁴ To be sure, Churchill himself, in *The World Crisis*, did little to dispel this account describing his part in seeking a “short cut to victory” as that of a visionary strategist seeking alternatives to the carnage in the West.¹⁷⁵ More recent scholarship generally takes a more nuanced view and is cautious in accepting Churchill’s account. Given the reasonably obvious conclusion that Churchill had a keen

¹⁷³ Prior, *Gallipoli*, 71.

¹⁷⁴ Bean’s view has already been reported, to this might be added, *inter alia*, those of chroniclers such as Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, *The Uncensored Dardanelles* (London: Hutchinson, 1922), John North, *Gallipoli: The Fading Vision* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1936) and General Ellison’s post war account cited elsewhere.

¹⁷⁵ Churchill, *The World Crisis*, 49.

ulterior motive for describing himself in such terms, both to cast a positive light on his role in what turned out to be a failure and to maintain his credibility as a strategist and statesmanlike credentials to a contemporary readership – noting that *The World Crisis* was published in 1939. Indeed this revision of Churchill's true role has been taken to a new and fascinating extreme in a recent publication by Australian author Graham Clews. Clews takes the position that, far from being the enthusiastic advocate of the Dardanelles Campaign, Churchill in fact proposed the naval-only attack in an attempt to win a quick and low cost naval victory. This, runs Clews' thesis, would allow Churchill to reap the political and military capital he required to take forward his more favored schemes, those associated with seizing an island off Germany or unleashing the RN in the Baltic.¹⁷⁶ Thought provoking as this view is, it does not convince completely and, in any case, examination of the primary sources cannot but reveal that, whatever his motivation, Churchill was undoubtedly the most articulate, forceful and convincing of the members of the War Council. Even Fisher, who perhaps had cause to rue his political master's talents, was wistfully effusive in his praise in this respect referring to Churchill as a "subtle dialectician" who could 'talk a bird out of a tree.'¹⁷⁷ Lloyd George had an equally strong view, noting Churchill's "powerful mind" and his ability to be "indefatigable in pressing it upon the acceptance of anyone who matters in the decision."¹⁷⁸ The Dardanelles Commission acknowledged Churchills leading role in the War Council's decision making of early 1915 and censured him, relatively mildly, for being "carried away by his sanguine temperament and his firm belief in the success of the undertaking."¹⁷⁹ This author accepts their view. Churchill's role in the campaign was that of the most articulate and forceful of its advocates, he did not invent it and went no further than did any

¹⁷⁶ Graham T. Clews, *Churchill's Dilemma* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010).

¹⁷⁷ Quoted in: Higgins, *Winston Churchill and the Dardanelles*. 140.

¹⁷⁸ Quoted in: Marder, *Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, 213.

¹⁷⁹ Dardanelles Commission, 1st Report, 29.

other member of the War Council in either masking its frailties or overplaying its possibilities. There is no evidence that he ever sought actively to muzzle Fisher's doubts and if Fisher was silent because of his regard for Churchill personally or, as he claimed, to maintain Admiralty solidarity in public, this is hardly compelling evidence with which to damn Churchill. Thus, whilst Churchill certainly should not escape responsibility for the failure of the offensive, he should receive it as part of a collective decision-making body not, as has so often been the case in the past, in being cast as the sole villain.

Kitchener, in the historiography of the campaign, has generally been less roughly handled by posterity. While the Dardanelles Commission criticized him both for his failure to ensure that troops (specifically the 29 Div) were not on hand earlier than mid-April to prosecute an amphibious landing and also for "not sufficiently availing himself of the services of his General Staff" leading to "confusion and want of efficiency," there is a view that his death protected him from more severe criticism.¹⁸⁰ Clews is representative when he says that "Kitchener generally has come off too lightly for his part in the Dardanelles debacle," while Rhodes-James perhaps epitomizes the majority view of Kitchener's secondary culpability to the First Lord when he states that "Kitchener had been a too-willing recipient of Churchill's glowing enthusiasm and confidence."¹⁸¹ Where his performance was been analyzed the criticism tended to cover two areas. Firstly, that he lacked a grand strategic vision and therefore that he vacillated between giving his full support for the Western Front and the Dardanelles Campaign to the benefit of neither and the significant detriment of the latter. Secondly, it is mooted; such was his unassailable military stature and reputation that his word was law on all military matters. Therefore, he eclipsed the General Staff as the chief provider of military advice to the War

¹⁸⁰ Dardanelles Commission, 1st Report, 43.

¹⁸¹ Clews, *Churchill's Dilemma*, xix. Rhodes-James, *Gallipoli*, 41.

Council but yet lacked the personal capacity or the inclination towards full disclosure to provide the detail necessary for the Council to make fully informed decisions.

This author is unable to support the first proposition based on a thorough examination of the primary sources. In the War Council meetings of early 1915 it is true that Kitchener variously offered support for the embryonic Dardanelles Campaign only to; seemingly, withdraw that support at the next meeting. The drawn out debate over the availability of the 29 Div is a case in point in this respect. However, rather than the wavering of an unmade up mind, as sometimes portrayed, Kitchener instead repeatedly demonstrated a firm and fixed grand strategic view. He remained clear that the crucible of the war was the fight against Germany, that the massive manpower resources of the Russians were likely to be the allies' main means of winning this fight. To Kitchener, therefore, the Anglo/French effort on the Western Front was paramount in order to keep as many Germans away from engaging the Russians as possible. For Kitchener, the Dardanelles were secondary, perhaps a useful means of supporting Russia somewhat more proximately in geographical terms, but only to be fought with whatever forces could be spared by the Western Front. A recent revisionist historian makes this point concisely when he states that "Kitchener's insistence on limiting the size of any force sent to the Mediterranean, coupled with his emphasis on the primacy of the Western Front...made it quite clear that he considered such efforts [in the Mediterranean] to be subsidiary to the struggle in France."¹⁸² The same historian goes on to make a very telling point, and one which this author regards as a more egregious failing on Kitchener's part, when he points out that "secretive by nature, used to operating on his own, and suspicious of his colleagues discretion with respect to military secrets, Kitchener often failed to present a reasoned justification for his policies to the rest of the government."¹⁸³ Thus, it

¹⁸² Neilson, *A Reputation Refurbished?* 215.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 226.

is not for a lack of a grand strategic vision that Kitchener must stand condemned, but rather for his inability or unwillingness to explain it to the War Council in a coherent and actionable manner.

The fact that Kitchener could not, for whatever reason, share his insight effectively with the War Council would not have been so significant a failing had the General Staff and the CIGS in particular, been operating correctly and providing the professional military advice it was mandated to do. However, as has already been described, this did not occur and it is for this reason that the second criticism of Kitchener contains more credibility. That Kitchener was “all powerful, imperturbable, reserved [and] dominated absolutely our [War Council] counsels at the time,” seems undeniable.¹⁸⁴ The War Council’s records at no stage show any member contradicting or even effectively questioning any of Kitchener’s pronouncements until very late in the campaign. The unsuitability of Wolfe Murray as CIGS and the silence and emasculation of the General Staff has been described above and to this must be added the fact that Wolfe Murray “considered himself a staff officer of Lord Kitchener...not called upon to express any independent opinion.”¹⁸⁵ This is hardly to be wondered at given the fact that Kitchener remained a serving Field Marshal as well as Secretary of State for War and was thus both the military superior and civilian master of the unfortunate CIGS.¹⁸⁶ It is a moot point for the purposes of this monograph whether Kitchener was an appropriate selection for Secretary of State for War in 1914 given his military background and rank. Indeed it is difficult to criticize Asquith for this decision in retrospect just as it would have been impossible for contemporaries to understand why he might have failed to make it at the time, but it is germane to consider how Kitchener’s

¹⁸⁴ Dardanelles Commission, 1st Report, 4.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁸⁶ In the British system as pertained until 1997 Field Marshals, once appointed to that rank, did not retire from military service although, by convention, their service was honorific unless holding a specific senior appointment.

temperament affected his dealings with the General Staff and War Council in the context of the Dardanelles Campaign. Long experience in semi-independent command in the farther reaches of the Empire, often as the only or one of a very few European officers in the theatre had made Kitchener self-sufficient to the point of mania. “He was constitutionally unable to delegate authority,” “was too shy or reserved to make many friends” and “had never suffered fools (or what he took to be fools) gladly.”¹⁸⁷ Moreover, he did not feel it wise to reveal his entire hand to a set of Liberal politicians (noting that Kitchener was strongly Conservative in personal political outlook) many of whom were notoriously indiscrete in both their personal lives and professional correspondence.¹⁸⁸ Kitchener also undervalued and underestimated the assistance which the, admittedly reduced, General Staff might afford him. It would appear that single handedly attempting to manage, administer, recruit, and direct a British Army fighting on several fronts in a war of unparalleled scope and complexity whilst simultaneously providing professional military advice to a War Council he never fully trusted and whose members he neither understood nor understood him, was ultimately beyond even Kitchener. That he failed to recognize the need to delegate, to trust and to empower is puzzling and, for his legacy, unfortunate. That no one in the War Council recognized that what Kitchener was being expected to do was all but impossible for one man, however great, is equally unfortunate. In the final analysis this author is forced to agree with the authorities already cited that Kitchener, by dint of his emasculation of the General Staff

¹⁸⁷ Gooch, *The Plans of War*, 304. Philip Warner, *Kitchener: The Man Behind the Legend* (New York: Athenaeum, 1986), 194.

¹⁸⁸ Asquith’s romantic entanglement with Venetia Stanley has been recorded already. Lloyd George was, to borrow a splendid phrase from Warner, *Ibid.*, 183, “engaging in affairs with all the discrimination of an amorous rabbit.” Churchill, whilst not romantically involved nevertheless thought nothing of divulging details of the War Council’s discussions with social acquaintances – such were Edwardian political norms but Kitchener, a military officer might think, had a point!

and his inability to articulate fully his strategy and intentions, deserves greater censure than he generally receives.

The roles of Lloyd George, Grey, and Balfour have been described earlier in this paper. All three played a full role in the search for Grand Strategic alternatives to the carnage on the Western Front and all three participated, with apparent relish, in the wide-ranging debates of early 1915 that culminated in the decision to commit to the Dardanelles Campaign. Of the three senior War Council members perhaps Lloyd George was most enmired in dabbling in military strategic considerations in his suggestions concerning attacking Austria-Hungary through Salonica or Ragusa or Turkey via the Dardanelles or elsewhere. Balfour, as a long standing CID member and former PM, should have known better than to relegate the position of the military experts at the War Council to silent onlookers. Grey, on the other hand, was very much culpable in encouraging the wishful thinking that accompanied the assumption that the Balkan states would fall into line behind the alliance after a successful RN attack on the Dardanelles. However, the role of all three of these senior and influential figures should perhaps be judged as ancillary, as participants in rather than leaders of the debates and decisions. Thus, if the notion of the right of politics and politicians to concern themselves with all aspects of military activity is accepted they are all somewhat less blameworthy than the principal movers.

If the responsibility of Kitchener has often been described as secondary to that of Churchill, the responsibility of their mutual political chief, PM Asquith, has been all but air brushed out of the historical reckoning. For a man with the ultimate authority and ultimate responsibility for the leadership of his country and its Empire in a World War, this omission is astonishing. Even John Laffin, one of the most trenchant critics of the campaign, who devotes an entire chapter of his book to *The Guilty Men*, relegates the leader of the British Empire to a short sentence almost as an afterthought after excoriating criticism of just about everyone else

involved.¹⁸⁹ To this author, this attitude is baffling. It was Asquith who selected the War Council and therefore Kitchener. It was Asquith who decided to reinvent the CID as the War Council and thus mute the voices of the experts. It was Asquith who penned the conclusions of the seminal 13 January War Council meeting instructing the RN to take the Dardanelles with Constantinople as their objective. It was Asquith who failed to recall the War Council to contemplate the necessity of an amphibious landing in the wake of the repulse of the RN on March 18th. It was assuredly the PM who would have been lauded had the campaign succeeded but yet, in its failure, the responsibility has been almost entirely shifted elsewhere.

Asquith's entire approach to the higher management of the war, as evidenced in the primary sources, strikes the reader as extraordinarily detached. Indeed, even many of his contemporaries wondered whether his heart was really in it. One of his biographers recounts a lighthearted yet telling story of a meeting between Asquith and the actress and socialite Lady Maud Tree in late 1914 at Walmer Castle in Kent, Asquith's habitual retreat from the cares of his premiership. Having spent a day with the Asquiths Lady Tree turned to her host and asked, archly, "Mr. Asquith, do you take an interest in the war?"¹⁹⁰ Lord Jenkins passes this off by describing Asquith's insouciant temperament, built over long years of peacetime governance and party political wrangling thus:

"The battles had to be fought and the suffering had to be endured, but he [Asquith] was too eclectic to fill his mind with any single subject and too fastidious to pretend to an enthusiasm [for the war] which he did not feel."¹⁹¹

Even during the critical January 13th War Council Asquith was distracted, admitting later to Venetia Stanley that he had spent part of the meeting casting "furtive glances at your letter."¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Laffin, *Damn the Dardanelles*, 207.

¹⁹⁰ Jenkins, *Asquith*, 348.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 348.

¹⁹² H.H. Asquith to Venetia Stanley, January 13, 1915, quoted in: Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 412.


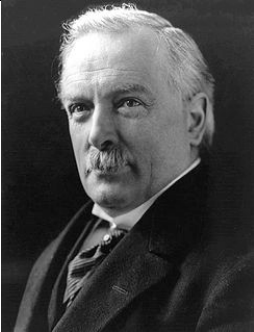

Not a shining example of the single-minded focus expected of a national war leader. It seems an inescapable truth that whatever Asquith's talent as a peacetime politician and leader, he was not suited by temperament, experience, or inclination to be the dynamic, decisive and, above all, successful leader of the British Empire at war. The historical record judges him too leniently, with Asquith stands the responsibility for presiding over the decision to assault the Dardanelles and with Asquith, ultimately, stands the responsibility for failure.


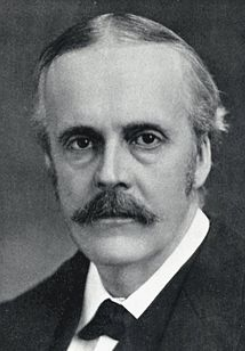

Summary and Conclusions




This author believes that the Dardanelles Campaign was founded upon sound strategic principles. Not only was the War Council acting entirely correctly in reassessing the future direction of the War from Britain's point of view in early 1915, it would have been negligent for it not to have done so given the wastage and stasis on the Western Front. The selection of what must have appeared a peripheral theatre of war to the French and to many in the BEF, was one that not only spoke to Britain's 'Blue Water' strategic heritage but also one that played to her maritime strength. The initial outline concept of an economy of effort operation, buying time for the New Armies to reach their full potential made good sense. Even if, as has been examined, the underlying assumptions were perhaps somewhat optimistic they were not as chimerical as many later scholars have chosen to portray them. There is even a case to be made in favor of the War Council directing the exact location of the campaign given the subordination of the military aim to the political imperative. That there should have been a better detailed naval appreciation of the Carden Plan prior to its launch, and indeed prior to Churchill mentioning it to the War Council, is unquestionable. Similarly unquestionable is the fact that a joint appreciation should have been made when troops became available to support the RN and at the very least after the failure of de Robeck's attack on March 18th. That such appreciations would have afforded the War Council (had they chosen to read them) a more realistic understanding of the difficulties of what they were asking their navy and army to do is equally plain. Whether this would have led, as is so often

posited, to the cancellation of the operation or even of a delay to the amphibious assault is much less clear. It is the view of this author that a combination of assumed racial and cultural superiority over the decadent and decaying Ottoman Empire and an absolute faith in the mighty RN born of over 150 years of untarnished success and maritime mastery would have won the day. Thus, in many ways it matters not that Fisher's nerve failed him, that Kitchener's iconic status and inarticulate nature stymied debate, that Churchill's eloquence and verve carried others along with him or that Asquith's leadership style and management structures were ill adapted for wartime conditions. What mattered in early 1915 were faith, optimism, and belief in the bulldog spirit. By late 1915 all three had been shattered and the withdrawal from Cape Helles in early January 1916 was as much a defining moment in the psychological decline of the British Empire as was the loss of Singapore less than a generation later.



Appendix A: Dramatis Personae




Photograph	Appointment and Details	Outline Biography
The War Council		
	<p>Prime Minister: H.H. Asquith 1852 - 1928 In post: 1908 - 1916</p>	<p>One of the great radical reforming Liberal PMs. Asquith's keen political brain and Parliamentary organizing ability saw him excel as a peacetime PM with successes in welfare reform, constitutional change and defence financing. He proved less successful as a wartime leader with the 'shell crisis', the Dardanelles Campaign, the Easter Rising and the bloody stalemate on the Western Front contributing to his downfall in late 1916</p>
	<p>Chancellor of the Exchequer: David Lloyd George 1863 - 1945 In post: 1908 – 1915 Prime Minister: 1916 - 1922</p>	<p>Charismatic Welsh Liberal who will be remembered for laying the foundations for Britain's welfare state in a series of groundbreaking pre-war reforms, for his wartime leadership and for his role in the Versailles peace agreements. In some quarters he will also be remembered for his womanizing, for overseeing the demise of the Liberal Party as a political force and for his defeatist attitude in the early stages of World War 2</p>
	<p>First Lord of the Admiralty: Winston Churchill 1874 - 1965 In post: 1911 – 1915 Prime Minister: 1940 – 1945, 1951 - 1955</p>	<p>Political giant of 20th century Britain. Soldier, journalist, author, painter, politician and statesman. Political survivor who left Conservatives for Liberals in 1904 and rejoined Conservatives in 1924 earning the enmity of many on both sides in the process. Fell from grace over the Dardanelles and spent much of 1920s and 1930s in political wilderness returning to power only in 1940. Regarded by many as Britain's greatest PM and by all as its greatest wartime premier</p>





 <p>A black and white portrait of Sir Edward Grey, a man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit and a white shirt with a dark tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression.</p>	<p>Foreign Secretary: Sir Edward Grey 1862 – 1933 In post: 1905 - 1916</p>	<p>Long serving Liberal statesman, diplomat and politician. Britain's longest serving Foreign Secretary. A master of the byzantine politics of pre-world war 1 Europe but proved overly sanguine and optimistic in advocacy of pan Balkan bloc during Dardanelles campaign. Fell from power with Asquith in 1916. Probably best known for stating that "the lamps are going out all over Europe" on the outbreak of the war</p>
 <p>A black and white portrait of Sir Arthur Balfour, a man with a mustache, wearing a dark suit and a white shirt with a dark tie. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera.</p>	<p>Ex Officio member of the War Council: Sir Arthur Balfour 1848 – 1930 In Post: 1914 – 1915 First Lord of the Admiralty: 1915 – 1916 Prime Minister: 1902 - 1905</p>	<p>Conservative politician and former PM brought into the War Council to add cross party consensus. Initially an advocate of Dardanelles Campaign he replaced Churchill as First Lord in May 1915 and remained supportive of the campaign. Foreign Minister under Lloyd George's administration from 1916 – 1919. Remembered for the Balfour Declaration on Jewish state in Palestine and for Versailles Treaty negotiations</p>
 <p>A black and white portrait of Field Marshal Horatio Herbert Kitchener, a man with a mustache, wearing a dark military uniform with many medals and a sash. He is looking directly at the camera.</p>	<p>Secretary of State for War: Field Marshal Horatio Herbert Kitchener 1850 – 1916 In post: 1914 - 1916</p>	<p>Senior British soldier and colonial administrator. Wide imperial service including conquest of the Sudan, CinC during Boer War, CinC Indian Army and 'Sirdar' of Egypt made Kitchener the obvious choice as Secretary of State for War in 1914. Uniquely he understood likely duration and demands of total war and led rapid expansion of British Army. Reluctant advocate of land element of Dardanelles campaign, largely due to need to keep Russia in the war. Influence waned as campaign progressed. Died at sea on route to Russia in 1916</p>


	<p>Lord Chancellor: R.B. Haldane 1856 – 1928 In post: 1912 – 1915 Secretary of State for War: 1905 - 1912</p>	<p>Influential British Liberal Imperialist and later Labour Party politician, lawyer and philosopher. He was Secretary of State for War between 1905 and 1912 during which time the 'Haldane Reforms', reforming the Army and creating the General Staff, were implemented. Raised to the peerage as Viscount Haldane in 1911, he was Lord Chancellor between 1912 and 1915, when he was forced to resign because of his supposed and unproven German sympathies. He later joined the Labour Party and once again served as Lord Chancellor in 1924 in the first ever Labour administration</p>
	<p>Secretary of the War Council and CID: Lt Col Maurice Hankey 1877 – 1963 In post: 1912 – 1938 Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster: 1940 - 1941</p>	<p>British civil servant who gained prominence as the first Cabinet Secretary and who later made the rare transition from the civil service to ministerial office. Long serving eminence gris of British strategy and policy, often the only source of cogent military advice during the Dardanelles campaign</p>
<p>The Professional Advisors</p>		
	<p>First Sea Lord: Admiral of the Fleet Sir John (Jacky) Fisher 1841 – 1920 In post: 1904 – 1910, 1914 - 1915</p>	<p>Second most influential RN figure in British history after Nelson. Innovator and reformer with substantial operational experience Fisher dragged the RN out of the Victorian age and made it a world class 20th century navy. A forceful advocate of using the RN against Germany his support of the Dardanelles campaign was contingent on a quick victory which did not reduce the dominance of the Home Fleet, his resignation in May 1915 over disagreements with Churchill on this issue also brought about Churchill's demise</p>

	<p>Senior Admiralty Advisor: Admiral of the Fleet Sir Arthur Wilson VC 1842 – 1921 In post: 1914 – 1918 First Sea Lord: 1910 - 1911</p>	<p>Long serving naval officer who had won the VC on land during the Sudan War of 1884. Briefly, and unsuccessfully, First Sea Lord in 1910 as a supporter of Fisher's reforms and recalled by Churchill in 1914 to act as a strategic advisor and member of Admiralty War Group. Never a supporter of the Dardanelles campaign he preferred to see the RN used in the North Sea against Germany</p>
	<p>Admiralty Advisor on Overseas Operations: Admiral Sir Henry Jackson 1855 – 1929 In post: 1914 – 1915 First Sea Lord: 1915 - 1916</p>	<p>Former Chief of Naval Operations who was appointed an advisor on overseas operations against German colonies in 1914 and a member of the Admiralty War Group. Luke warm advocate of Dardanelles campaign and was surprise selection as First Sea Lord following Fisher's resignation</p>
	<p>Chief of Admiralty War Staff and Naval Secretary to First Lord: Vice Admiral Henry Oliver 1865 – 1965 In post: 1914 – 1916 CinC Atlantic Fleet: 1924 - 1927</p>	<p>Senior RN staff officer and Churchill's naval secretary. Assisted in the planning of the naval-only attack at the Dardanelles</p>
	<p>Chief of the Imperial General Staff: Lt Gen Sir James Wolfe Murray 1853 – 1919 In post: 1914 - 1915</p>	<p>Former CinC South Africa, Murray was unexpectedly appointed CIGS following the death of General Sir Charles Douglas in October 1914. However Murray attended meetings of the war council without making any real contribution, leaving strategy entirely to Kitchener. For this lack of conviction Churchill gave Murray the nickname of "Sheep". Following the failure of the Dardanelles campaign, Murray was replaced by General Sir Archibald</p>

		Murray in September 1915
No photo available	Director of Military Operations: Maj Gen Sir Charles Callwell 1859 – 1928 In post: 1914 - 1916	Author and soldier recalled from retirement in 1914 and appointed DMO. Struggled to find a voice under Kitchener but was an efficient staff officer and organizer. Never an advocate of the Dardanelles campaign he later wrote a critical campaign history. Remembered for his authorship of ‘Small Wars’ which remains an important source on counter insurgency
The In-Theatre Commanders		
	Commander of the RN Aegean Squadron: Vice Admiral Sir Sackville Carden 1857 – 1930 In post: September 1914 – March 1915	Appointed to command the RN’s Mediterranean Squadron in September 1914 under French command. Carden was an experienced RN officer but his seagoing career was presumed to be over in 1912 when he was appointed Superintendent of the Malta dockyard. His command at the Dardanelles has been accused of lacking drive and his withdrawal on grounds of sickness just before the March 18, 1915 naval assault robbed him of any chance of proving his worth in battle
	Naval Commander at the Dardanelles: Vice Admiral Sir John de Robeck 1862 – 1928 In post: March 1915 – January 1916 CinC Atlantic Fleet: 1922 - 1924	Carden’s second in command who stepped into his shoes in time for the costly March 18th attack. Criticized by supporters of the campaign for failing to continue the naval-only assault. Handled the naval aspects of the evacuation from Gallipoli well and served out a useful career with the RN, retiring as an Admiral of the Fleet having commanded the prestigious Atlantic fleet

	<p>CinC MEF: General Sir Ian Standish Monteith Hamilton 1853 – 1947 In post: March – October 1915</p>	<p>Vastly experienced soldier, accomplished writer, poet and liberal minded socialite. Hamilton was the most senior British officer outside the BEF (for which he had been considered as a contender for command) and was commanding the UK's home defences when appointed to the MEF. Broadly criticized for what is seen as his weak handling of the campaign and failure to stand up to Kitchener he was dismissed in October 1915 and never held another military appointment.</p>
	<p>General Officer Commanding the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps: Lt Gen Sir William Birdwood 1865 – 1951 In post: November 1914 – March 1916 CinC Fifth Army: 1918 CinC India: 1925 - 1930</p>	<p>Protégé of Kitchener's and experienced Indian Army officer. Emerged from the Dardanelles with some credit although recent historians, particularly Australians, take a less positive view of his role. Promoted to command British Fifth Army for the Allied breakthrough on the Western Front in 1918 and, as a Field Marshal, became CinC India and narrowly missed becoming Governor General of Australia</p>
	<p>General Officer Commanding French Army Corps (Corps Expeditionnaire d'Orient): General Albert d'Amade 1856 – 1941 In post: February - May 1915</p>	<p>An experienced colonial soldier d'Amade was selected for his appointment partly due to his ability to integrate French colonial troops and partly because he had fallen out of favor in France while a Corps Commander. Proved to be a loyal subordinate to Hamilton but has been criticized for his Corps' unenterprising performance on the peninsula. Dismissed in May 1915 once the Dardanelles campaign had reverted to static, trench warfare</p>

The Turks		
	Ottoman Minister of War: Enver Pasha 1881 – 1922 In post: 1913 - 1918	Leading light of the ‘Young Turks’ and part of the triumvirate of the ‘Three Pashas (Enver, Talaat and Djemal) who ruled the Empire from 1913.
	Ottoman Minister of Finance and the Interior: Talaat Pasha 1874 – 1921 In post: 1913 - 1917	Second of the ‘Three Pashas’ Talaat combined the posts of Finance Minister and Minister of the Interior ultimately becoming Grand Visier (Prime Minister) in 1917. Often associated with the Armenian genocide Talaat was assassinated by an Armenian émigré in 1921
	Ottoman Minister of Marine: Djemal Pasha 1872 – 1922 In post: 1913 - 1917	The third of the ‘Three Pashas’ Djemal was formally the Minister of Marine but, for most of world war 1 he held field command in Palestine and Syria. Here he attempted to invade Egypt in late 1914 but was thrown back and eventually defeated in 1917 by a combination of General Allenby and the Arab uprising. Like Talaat he was assassinated by Armenians in revenge for his part in the Armenian genocide
	Ottoman CinC Dardanelles: Lt Gen Otto Liman von Sanders 1855 – 1929 In post: March 1915 – January 1916	German advisor to the Ottoman Army who was appointed commander of the Fifth Turkish Army at the Dardanelles in March 1915. He is credited with energizing Turkish defensive arrangements and for overseeing the defeat of the allies. Remained in Turkey in command and advisory positions throughout the war

	<p>Commander Ottoman 19th Division: Lt Col Mustafa Kemal (light colored uniform, front, third from left) 1881 – 1938 In post: February 1915 – January 1916 President of Turkey: 1923 - 1938</p>	<p>One of the original ‘Young Turks’ Kemal had fallen out with Enver Pasha and had returned to his military career. His leadership of the 19th division at the Dardanelles propelled him into national awareness and helped pave the way for his rise to power after the war</p>
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Note: The information used to generate these pen pictures has been drawn from a number of sources. These include; Wikipedia, www.historylearningsite.co.uk, www.gallipoli-association.org, www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone, www.awm.gov.au, www.iwm.org.uk, and www.britannica.com in addition to the publications listed in the bibliography.

Sources: The illustrations have been variously sourced and are all out of copyright. Sources are as follows. Asquith: George Grantham Bain, H.H. Asquith, Bain News Service (Library of Congress), unknown date between 1915 and 1920. Lloyd George: Harris and Ewing Collection, David Lloyd George, Library of Congress, c1919. Churchill: Unknown photographer, Winston.S.Churchill meeting the workers, Imperial War Museum, 1918. Grey: Harris and Ewing Collection, Sir Edward Grey, Library of Congress, 1914. Balfour: Unknown photographer, Arthur James Balfour, University of Glasgow Collection, c1890. Kitchener: Alexander Bassano, Horatio Herbert Kitchener, 1st Earl Kitchener, The Illustrated War News, 1916. Haldane: Unknown photographer, Richard Haldane, 1st Viscount Haldane, Wikipedia commons, c1913. Hankey: Unknown photographer, Hankey, Churchill’s cheerleader, www.rdfreeman.net, date of publication unknown. Fisher: George Grantham Bain, Adm. Sir John Fisher, Bain News Service (Library of Congress), 1915. Wilson: Ross Loudon, Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson, UK Admiralty Department, 1911. Jackson: Photographer unknown, Sir Henry Jackson, Wikipedia commons, date of publication unknown. Oliver: Francis Dod RA, Vice Admiral Sir Henry Oliver, Imperial War Museum, 1917. Wolfe Murray: Leslie Ward, Caricature of Sir James Murray, Vanity Fair Magazine, 1905. Carden: unknown photographer, Vice Admiral Sir Sackville Hamilton Carden, The Gallipoli Association, unknown date before 1910. De Robeck: artist unknown, Sir John de Robeck, American Press Association, 1915. Hamilton: photographer unknown, General Sir Ian Hamilton, The Long, Long Trail, www.longlongtrail.co.uk, 1915. Birdwood: George Grantham Bain, General Sir William Birdwood, Bain News Service (Library of Congress), 1920. D’Amade: George Grantham Bain, General Albert Gerard Leo d’Amade, Bain News Service (Library of Congress), 1915. Enver: Carl Pietzner, Enver Pasha, Sport and Salon (Germany), 1915. Talaat: unknown photographer, Mehmet Talat Pasha, Wikipedia commons, date of publication unknown. Djemal: unknown photographer, Djemal Pasha, Wikipedia commons, date of publication unknown. Von Sanders: unknown photographer, Otto Liman Von Sanders, American Press Association, c1914. Kemal: unknown photographer, Lt. Col. Mustafa Kemal, Wikipedia commons, date of publication unknown (likely 1915).

Appendix B: Detailed Chronology of the Dardanelles Campaign

Date	Event	Comment
3 August 1914	Churchill orders the confiscation of two Turkish battleships under construction in the UK	Later to become HMS Erin and HMS Agincourt
4 August 1914	UK declares war on Germany, outbreak of World War 1 from British perspective	In response to German invasion on Belgium
5 August 1914	Ottoman Empire closes the Dardanelles Straits	
10 August 1914	German warships SMS Goeben and SMS Breslau, having evaded allied pursuit in the Mediterranean, reach the Dardanelles and are granted passage	Anglo-French squadron closes up on the Dardanelles
12 August 1914	UK declares war on Austria-Hungary	
28 October 1914	Ottoman navy raids Russian Black Sea ports including Odessa and Sevastopol	Led by former SMS Goeben and Breslau now reflagged as Turkish warships
2 November 1914	Russia declares war on Ottoman Empire	
3 November 1914	Royal Navy squadron bombards the Turkish forts at the entrance to the Dardanelles	On orders from First Lord
5 November 1914	UK declares war on Ottoman Empire	France declares war at the same time
11 November 1914	Sultan Mehmed V declares Jihad on the Allies	
25 November 1914	War Council debates defence of Egypt	
20 December 1914	HMS Doris bombards and later blows up sections of Berlin to Baghdad railway near Alexandretta	
22 December 1914 – 2 January 1915	Battle of Sarikamish between Turks and Russians, Russians eventually victorious	
28 December 1914	Hankey writes 'Boxing Day Memorandum'	
29 December 1914	Churchill writes to Asquith on future UK strategy	
31 December 1914	Lloyd George writes War Council memorandum on future strategy	
1 January 1915	Russian appeal for demonstration against Turks received by Foreign Office	Kitchener and Churchill discuss options
3 January 1915	Churchill signals Carden about naval only forcing Dardanelles	Carden replies 5 and 11 January
8 January 1915	War Council discuss strategic options, Kitchener raises Dardanelles	
13 January 1915	War Council continue to discuss strategic options, Churchill briefs the Carden plan,	

	Asquith instructs Admiralty to bombard and take the Gallipoli Peninsula	
25 January 1915	Fisher writes memo on sea power	
28 January 1915	Fisher and Churchill meet Asquith to discuss their differences over Dardanelles which resurface at subsequent War Council meeting	
28 January – 3 February 1915	Djemel Pasha's attack on Suez Canal repulsed	
19 February 1915	Carden opens bombardment of Dardanelles defences	
19 February 1915	War Council decides to dispatch significant land forces to Dardanelles area	ANZAC Corps, RN Division and 29 Div (later rescinded but ultimately confirmed on 10 March)
22 February 1915	<i>The Times</i> runs extensive reporting of bombardment	
24 February 1915	War Council send Birdwood to Dardanelles as senior Army officer	
25 February 1915	Bombardment resumed after bad weather delay	
3 March 1915	War Council discusses options after a rapid Turkish collapse	Similar discussions on 10 March
10 March 1915	Night time bombardment and sweeping operations, War Council selects Hamilton as MEF commander	Hamilton formally appointed on 12 March
13 March 1915	Daylight mine sweeping repelled and aborted	
16 March 1915	Carden steps down due to ill health, replaced by De Robeck	
17 March 1915	Hamilton arrives off the Dardanelles	
18 March 1915	De Robeck's main assault is repelled with the loss of three battleships	With a further three critically damaged
22 March 1915	Hamilton and De Robeck confer and decide against further naval only attack and in favor of a joint amphibious landing	
26 March 1915	German General, Otto Liman von Sanders takes command of Dardanelles defences	
25 April 1915	British Empire and French forces make amphibious landings on the Gallipoli peninsula	
28 April 1915	First Battle of Krithia	British and French forces suffer four thousand casualties for little gain
6 – 8 May 1915	Second Battle of Krithia	Allied attempts at advancing are thwarted again

15 May 1915	Fisher resigns as First Sea Lord over reduction of RN power in North Sea in favor of the Dardanelles	
18 – 20 May 1915	Turkish forces mount a counter attack against the ANZACs but are repulsed, suffering ten thousand casualties	
26 May 1915	Asquith forced to create coalition government, Churchill replaced as First Lord by Balfour	In fact Churchill had already resigned in the wake of Fisher's departure
4 June 1915	Third Battle of Krithia	British and French forces mount a limited attack but still fail to reach their objectives
6 - 21 August 1915	The August Offensive. British attack on Helles front and land New Army Corps at Suvla, ANZACs attempt main break out operation at Sari Bair	
16 October 1915	Hamilton relieved as CinC MEF	Birdwood takes over temporarily
28 October 1915	General Sir Charles Monro takes over command and recommends evacuation	
22 November 1915	Kitchener tours the Dardanelles and recommends evacuation	Kitchener was sent by the War Council's successor organization, the War Committee
8 December 1915	The War Committee ratifies Kitchener's recommendations and Monro is instructed to plan evacuation	
19 – 20 December 1915	ANZAC and Suvla lodgments evacuated	
9 January 1916	Helles lodgment evacuated without loss	

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